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I sat alone staring at the river, and longing for the return of my husband

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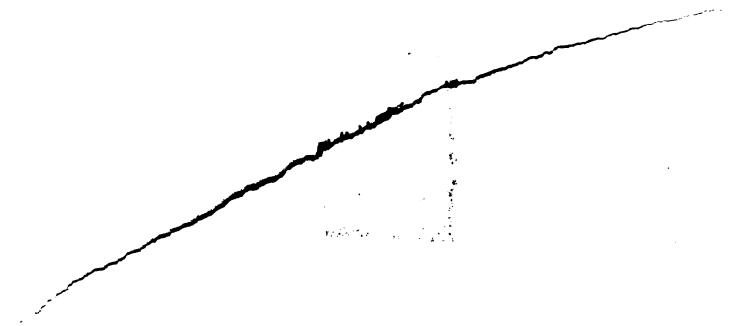

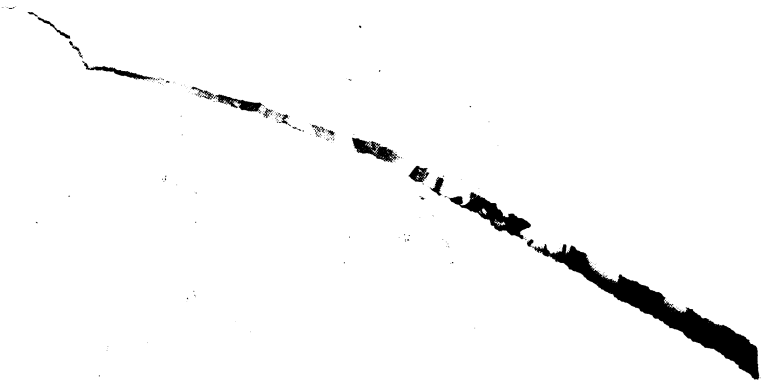

BY WILD WAVES TOSSED

AN OCEAN LOVE STORY

BY

CAPTAIN JACK BRAND

LATE U. S. N.

AUTHOR OF "THE FREE LANCES" IN
"ROUGH RIDERS OF THE SEA" SERIES

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE KINNEYS

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BY WILD WAVES TOSSED

CHAPTER ONE

IN WHICH I AM ABDUCTED

I WAS as helpless as a baby; more so, in fact, for a baby can move its members and lift up its voice, I believe; in other words, it can kick and cry while I could do neither—although I confessed to a passionate desire to do both, unladylike though either might be. There was no doubt about that last proposition. At Miss Clapperton's "Select Academy for High-born Young Females" I had been taught laboriously that no lady ever lifted her voice above the ordinary mincing and somewhat simpering conversational tone affected in that famous institution. And as for kicking! Miss Clapperton, who was a model of decorum, would have fainted dead away at the mere thought, let alone the mention, of the act. Indeed, by an extraordinary anatomical obliquity, no lady in that society was ever supposed to have a leg even—much less two!

Almost the only circumstance which ever permitted the violation of these Clappertonian injunctions as to lowering voice and ignoring limb was the advent of a mouse. The inopportune arrival of this dreaded animal abrogated all rules. The noble young misses of Clapperton Villa—and even the demoiselles Clapperton them-

selves—on such an occasion would both scream and kick and give visible demonstration of the stability and actuality of their nether anatomy, as I myself could testify.

There were mice but fortunately no rats in the villa, but there was one walking alongside me which I was sure would have warranted me in anything I might do, however extravagant and outrageous it might be. Too bad that, with so good an excuse for kicking and screaming, I could do neither. Why not? Well, in the first place, my feet were tied together just above my ankles with a deftly passed lashing which was drawn so tight that it hurt me cruelly. Also my hands had been twisted behind my back and a cord passed rapidly around my waist held them firmly to my sides, which was a good thing, for I should have thrown decorum to the wind and have scratched like a cat, if the men had not been so quick. No, I was not entirely gagged, but a heavy cloak had been thrown over my head and around my face, and it was folly to attempt to scream through the folds of it. Besides, it was night, and before I had been seized I had marked that nobody was by; that I was, as I supposed, completely alone.

The cloak had been cast over my head, my hands had been seized by one man, my feet bound by another, and I had been lifted into the air for all the world like a trussed fowl by two or three men who took no special care to conserve my modesty in their handling of me. There was only one thing to be thankful for in the whole performance, and that was that it was so pitch dark that none of them could see. No more by the same

token could I, and my folly in wandering thus far from the door of the inn at the late hour—for the country—of nine o'clock was the more pronounced.

But if a fold of the cloak falling by unfortunate mischance across my mouth prevented me from crying out and, in fact, almost choked me, my hearing, the only faculty left me, was abnormally acute. But little had been said by anyone during my seizure, and yet, when I was completely helpless and lifted in the air in the arms of the men, a commanding voice said sharply, yet in an undertone:

"Bring her this way."

The voice added, after my bearers had got in motion:

"Handle her gently, men, and step lively."

I recognized the voice of the man instantly. He was the rat I spoke of.

Two days before I had loved this man. I had trusted him, or I had been willing to trust him with everything, for I had been his promised wife. Now, if I could have had a free hand and a weapon, I thought I could cheerfully have killed him. He had insulted me that morning, and the insult had been the greater because, at the same time, he had struck down my trust and faith in humanity, masculine humanity, that is.

My father, General William Martindale, of an old and distinguished Sussex family, had gambled away all his patrimony. I knew he had been in financial difficulties, but it was not until I read the letter which they took from his dead body that I became aware of how great those difficulties were. When he had made an end of

everything, he had left me to bear the burden of the disgrace by shooting himself through the heart.

I had no mother. She had died in bringing me into the world. My father had been an officer of the East India Company, and while he was amassing lacs of rupees, I had been committed to the care of distant relatives and strangers, ending with Miss Clapperton's "Select Academy" in England.

He came back to me after a score of years with millions, so they said, but with an impaired constitution. He was speedily drawn into the gayest and wildest life of London, and in his old age was unable to stand the pace. Well, I at least could not reproach him. He had treated me most kindly while he had lived. He had lavished everything upon me. I possessed jewels and clothes which were the envy of England. Some of them I had still. It was characteristic of my father that he might have availed himself of some of these to stave off his creditors, but he could gamble away his own property, not that he had given to his daughter.

Looked upon as a great heiress, I had been much sought after in my brief season out of school, and had become engaged to the villain who was prosecuting his love affair with the gag and fetters of this night. I think my father might have stayed and faced the music somehow or other for my sake—whatever they say about suicides, he at least was not a coward—had it not been for the assurance in which he evidently rested comfortable that I was provided for in my betrothal to Captain Sir Percy Reade of the Royal Navy.

Sir Percy was honestly in love with me, I believe, or he had been. No woman would ever admit for a moment that any man who presumed to address her was not in love with her, but it is undeniable that he valued my supposed fortune more than my person, for when my father's death brought a world of creditors about our ears, Sir Percy Reade—the coward!—balked at the marriage. That he had some sort of love for me is borne out by the fact that he made me a certain offer—the thought of it brings the blood to my cheek, brought it to my cheek then!

He was a handsome, insolent sort of a man. I had taken his swagger for pride, his bravado for gallantry. I had an impulse to strike him then and there when he made his insulting proposition, but I was so young and so alone—there wasn't a relative in the world I could turn to, except a cousin of my father's who had gone to America and settled in Virginia, or Massachusetts, or some portion of that God-forsaken country—I did not know what to do. I simply turned and left him with a few words which perhaps, after all, were better than a blow, for they must have stung, or they would have, if he had been a man of honor.

There was some little property in Sussex which by chance was not encumbered, and thither I had gone after the funeral to see what might be made of it—this at the suggestion of my father's attorneys. I had stopped there at a comfortable-looking inn surrounded by spacious grounds, and after doing what I could to further the business in hand with the local solicitor, I

had strayed down to the extreme end of the garden late in the evening and had sat there until long after dark staring at the waters of the river flowing by, pondering my wretched fortune and wondering what my future would be. And there they had seized me just as I had about made up my mind to get what I could on my trinkets and jewelry and go to America.

It was evident to me what was in Sir Percy's mind. He would have me willy-nilly. Failing marriage—no longer to be thought of with a portionless maid!—and my rejection of his infamous proposition, he would take by force what he could not get by permission.

Oh, would he? I had some of the Martindale spirit in me. It had not all been driven out of me at Miss Clapperton's institution. I was the daughter of a soldier, and if I could not preserve my own honor in any other way, I could at least die. Sir Percy Reade was a man of influence which his broken fortunes had not greatly impaired. I, since the death of my father, was alone and friendless, and he thought he could work his will with me with impunity. But could he? My fingers clenched beneath the lashings. There would be an hour of reckoning between myself and Captain Reade, and I did not envy him his part in it.

Meanwhile, what was to be done? Clearly nothing at present. There were at least three men carrying me along, and from Sir Percy's whispered directions, he was walking by my side. I could do nothing against four stalwart men. I must bide my time. I had struggled at first, but had quickly realized the futility of it,

and now resolved to husband my strength for a chance which would make my efforts worth while. I could not tell whither I was being taken, or what was the present purpose of my captors. I determined to remain quiet, therefore, but with every faculty keenly on the alert ready to seize any opportunity.

Presently the men stopped. My feet were deposited on the ground, although I was tightly held, which was a good thing, for I was so numb and helpless that I would have fallen if I had not been supported. Presently a voice spoke to me close by my ear. It was Sir Percy's voice. How I hated that man!

"Mistress Caroline," he began, "I beg to assure you that no physical harm is intended to you now. You need be under no apprehensions as to that. We are nearing the stable yard of the inn. I am about to place you in a carriage. I desire to make this little adventure as easy for you as possible. If you give your word not to cry out, I will take the cloak from your head. Unless you do give me your word to keep silence, I shall have to draw it tighter to prevent you from alarming the neighborhood, unpleasant though the necessity is. Do you understand me, madam?"

I made shift to nod my head in the folds of the cloak.

"Very good. Will you give your word then? If you will, bow your head forward."

There was no help for it. My head angrily bent forward.

"I accept your promise," said Sir Percy promptly.

The next instant the lashings of the cloak were un-

tied, and it was drawn from my head. Oh, how good it was to breathe the fresh air again!

Now, some women in my position would not have scrupled to break their word, but would have shouted lustily then and there, but I was different. The last two years of my life had been spent in close association with my father, and I had caught something of the spirit of the soldier and gentleman from him.

"Your word," said the old man, "is the most precious thing you have. When it is given, it must be held to your own hurt. A gentleman," he often remarked, "is always at a disadvantage in dealing with a scoundrel or a blackguard, for the word of the one is worth nothing and the word of the other represents himself. A woman's honor is sometimes included in another thought, but a woman's word—well," he said, "I want my daughter to be as myself."

So I was pledged to remain silent. Just as my father had pointed out, I was bound by my promise to a villain. Never mind, a time would come when I would not be so bound, and then——

"What are you going to do with me?" I whispered.

"Take you a little drive, my dear," chuckled Sir Percy in the darkness, "and then a little voyage on my ship."

How I loathed him! I longed to get my hands on him. All the results of Miss Clapperton's training vanished instantly. I believe I did strain at my bonds until Sir Percy laid a hand on mine. His hateful touch brought me to my senses.

"Take your hand off my own," I whispered, "and I will be quiet."

Sir Percy laughed.

"You will be anxious to feel the touch of my hands before long."

I made no answer. Anything that I could say would only make my condition worse. Sir Percy waited a moment and then motioned the men to lift me up again.

"The carriage is there by the gate," he said.

"A moment," I whispered. "I wish to be alone in that carriage."

"I'd as soon be in a cage with a wild cat," chuckled Sir Percy, "as with you in your present mood. You shall have your wish, madam, but I shall ride at one side of the door, my man at the other, and I warn you that any attempt at escape will be fruitless."

"Thank you," I said with ironic civility. "I am obliged to you for leaving me alone and for guarding me so carefully. Now, if you will have these men untie my feet, I will walk to the carriage."

"No," said Sir Percy, "you are safer, I think, bound as you are. Lift her up, men. Gently!"

There was no help for it. I locked my teeth together, and again my hands contracted. However, the men were gentle enough considering what they had to do, and in a space they stopped before the door of one of those great old traveling coaches with which I had had limited acquaintance in short journeys with my father. It was still pitch dark, but a distant light from the taproom of the inn showed me four horses, a coachman,

and a footman. There was a servant holding two other horses saddled. The light enabled me to see that the men who were handling me were sailors. They wore the uniform of his Majesty's navy. They had been members of many a press gang doubtless, but never of any which had brought such a fish to their net as I that night, I dare swear. I suppose he got them off his brig; at any rate they were left behind as it afterwards developed.

I had time only for a rapid glance, for the door of the coach was opened and in I was thrust. I sank back on the seat, hands and feet still bound. The lashings hurt me cruelly, but I was too proud to utter a protest. The door was softly closed. There were whispered words outside; I could hear Sir Percy and his man mounting their horses. The driver spoke a word to his team. There was a straining at the traces; the coach started, moved, lurched heavily, and I fell over against a human form; my cheek brushed against a rough-clad shoulder.

There was a man in the coach with me!

CHAPTER TWO

IN WHICH FORTUNE PROVIDES A RESCUE

MY first impulse was to scream. Truth to tell, I forgot my plighted word, and would have given voice loudly had not a hand caught me by the arm with a grip so powerful that it made me forget the pain of my wrists for a moment. The next instant a small round piece of something cold—evidently a pistol barrel—was thrust against my forehead and a man's fierce voice whispered:

"If you make a sound, you're a dead man."

There was something so infinitely reassuring in this clearly impossible statement that I sank back in my corner with a long sigh of relief. My first thought had been that Sir Percy had played me false, and that the coach was tenanted by some of his people, but the fierceness of the threat which I had just heard reassured me on that point. Whoever this man was, he had no fellowship with my captors. I could fall into no worse hands than those which had seized me, and there was always a possibility of betterment in a change. I welcomed his proximity, therefore.

All this flashed through my mind as quickly as the actions of the stranger had been precipitate. As I

shrank back, the coach seat being wide, I drew away from him; his grasp on my arm relaxed, his arm shot forth in the darkness evidently feeling for my throat. It struck my breast and then the pistol was withdrawn, and the same voice exclaimed in astonishment:

"Good God, 'tis a woman!"

"Aye, sir," I replied. By this time the coach was going rapidly, and there was little danger of our being overheard. "A most unfortunate woman."

"Be silent!" cried the man sharply, apprehension as well as command in his voice.

But I was not to be silenced. I leaned toward him; I even fell against him. Shades of Miss Clapperton!

"Let me speak," I whispered. "I will not betray you."

The road was frightfully rough, and the old coach jumped and swayed terribly. The man put out his arm to steady me, and somehow or other it went about my waist. It was insulting, of course, but in some way it did not seem so then, and I so wanted comfort and support.

"If you will permit me, madam," he said softly in my ear, "I will hold you steady, and then we can talk the more easily."

"You are very good," said I, "but before we continue the conversation, would you mind cutting the lashings that bind me?"

"Dear heart!" exclaimed the man, "how stupid I have been."

I wondered if he referred to me, or whether his phrase

was a mere matter of speech. Anyway he released me, and then I could feel him plucking at the cords that bound my hands. Something cold pressed against my naked wrists. It was the blade of a knife. In an instant my hands were free.

"Is that all?" he whispered.

"My feet, sir."

He was down on his knees in a trice. It was pitch dark; the curtains of the coach were drawn, and no radiance at all came within from the lamps outside. He had to feel with hands and knife before he could release me. It was the second time I had been man-handled, but what a difference! In a moment those cords, too, were severed.

"Have you been tied long?" asked my companion, still kneeling at my feet.

"It seems an age, but I think only a few minutes," quoth I.

"Can you move your feet?"

I tried it vainly. Really they were numb with pain, and I told him so.

"Allow me?" he said respectfully enough. "I have been tied myself, and know what it means."

In a minute he was actually rubbing and chafing my ankles. I should have kicked him or screamed despite Miss Clapperton, but there was such power and strength in the kneading that he gave them, and such relief from the awful constriction of a few minutes before, that I weakly permitted him to continue until he saw fit to cease. Then he rose and resumed his seat by my side.

"Now, madam," said he, "tell me, I pray you, who you are, how you came here, and how I can serve you."

"Would it not be well, sir," replied I, "that you should give me your name and rank, and satisfy me of your quality before I presume to trust you with these important details?"

"As for my name, madam, you may call me Brown —William Brown, at your service. I am an American by birth; by profession, a sailor."

"And how come you here, sir?" I asked, greatly interested, although somewhat disappointed that my rescuer was an alien, a stranger, and apparently a man of little family, yet his accents were those of a gentleman.

"'Tis of little consequence, madam. The point is that I am here and anxious to serve you, which of course I cannot do unless you enlighten me as to why you are here and what peril you are in."

"My name," said I, seeing there was no help for it, and indeed there was something compelling about this man's manner even in the darkness, "is Caroline Martindale. I am the daughter of the late General William Martindale. My father was an East Indian officer who ran through his fortune . . . and died and left me . . . penniless. I have no relatives this side of the Atlantic Ocean. I was striving to realize on the broken remnants of his fortune and get enough money to cross the seas and throw myself upon the generosity of my father's kinsman and——"

"You are related to Major John Martindale of Virginia?"

"He is a cousin of my father's," I answered. "Do you know him?"

"Men in my station in life," he answered smoothly, "are not apt to know gentlemen of his rank, but I know of him."

"Is he a good man?"

"Worthy of relationship to you, madam, I am sure," he returned quickly, which I thought a very odd thing for him to say. It sounded more like the conventional compliment of a gentleman than the remark of a common sailor.

"Well," I resumed, "there was a man who had professed to love me—in short, I was engaged to him, but my father's death and the circumstances in which his estate was involved . . . the engagement was broken off, and then the gentleman——"

I stopped. I could not tell him.

"Go on, pray," said my companion of the darkness.

"He made a proposal to me which I——"

"The villain!" breathed the man fiercely.

"And then," I continued lamely, "when I refused, he resorted to this expedient."

"This expedient," said the man, "being an attempt to take by force what you would not grant from pleasure."

"Yes," said I, devoutly thankful for the darkness which hid my flaming cheeks.

"Who is this gentleman?" he asked, after a moment of silence.

"I doubt if you have ever heard of him," said I, "but his name is Reade. He is a naval officer."

"Ah, Sir Percy Reade, commanding his Majesty's brig *Porcupine*."

"The very same," I answered. "Then you do know him?"

"I have heard of him," said the man, with a concentration of hatred and rage in his tone that fairly startled me. "Of all the English sea captains, he is the most hated by American seamen."

"You forget, sir, that I am an Englishwoman," returned I promptly, quick to defend my country.

"I forget everything, madam," was the answer. "I remember only that you are a woman in distress, and that I am about to help you."

"How?" I asked curiously, my heart jumping in my breast with hope. Was it not providential that this way of deliverance seemed to be open before me? There was something in the bearing, in the voice, and in the manner of this man which made me feel that he could be trusted.

"Perhaps before I discuss ways and means with you, madam, it would be well to tell you something further of my story. I am a sailor with a mission. I mean I have some important papers, with the delivery of which I am charged, which renders it necessary for me to get to the United States with the least possible delay. In fact, I was on my way to the seacoast when, some wind of my mission having got abroad, the hue and cry was raised for me, and the chase became so hot that I took

refuge in an empty coach in this inn yard on my way to the shore. I had had no sleep for two days, and I am ashamed to admit that my weariness overcame me and I fell fast asleep. The horses must have been put to the coach very silently "—I could testify to that fact, if necessary—" for I was not awakened until you were bundled unceremoniously in beside me."

" It was fortunate for me," said I, " that you were here."

" And for me that my fellow occupant was a woman."

I declare I could almost fancy he bowed as he said that—and yet it came from a sailor.

" Now that we are here," asked I, " what is to be done next? "

" In the first place, there happens to be an American merchantman loading at Portsmouth. I am promised a passage to the Chesapeake Bay on her if I can get aboard. I am sure she will be glad to take you. She is bound for Baltimore via the Capes of Virginia, but means, I have no doubt, will present themselves for sending you up the James River to Major Martindale's plantation. We are not many miles from the seashore, I take it, and if we can get clear of the coach and your present captors, we may be able to make our way thither, always provided you are still in the same mind."

I seized the man by the arm at this, and actually shook him.

" Sir," said I, " I will go anywhere and do anything to get clear of the present situation."

"Very good," said he.

"Yes," I continued, "but how?"

"I have a plan, madam."

"And what is that?"

His answer was a question:

"Can you shoot a pistol?"

"I am familiar with the weapon," replied I. "My father was an expert marksman and oftentimes, in default of other competitors, he had me try my skill with him."

"Good!" said the man. "Nothing could have happened to better purpose. Your father evidently was a man after my own heart."

"All his soldiers loved him," said I, thinking to remind this young man whose services I was accepting of the difference between us, "and perhaps if he had been a seaman, his sailors would have done the same."

"I doubt it not," he replied gravely, as if conscious of his assumption.

He fumbled at his belt a moment. I could hear the withdrawal of a weapon and presently the click that indicated the cocking of the pistol.

"Your hand, madam," he said.

I reached it out toward him. He caught it. I wondered if he were going to kiss it, but his purpose was more warlike, for the next instant my fingers closed around the stock of the pistol. Oh, what joy filled my soul at that evidence of power!

"You have it?" he whispered.

"Sir, I thank you."

"Your fingers on the trigger, your thumb clear of the hammer?"

"Yes, yes, I understand it all."

"I have its mate here," he resumed. "Now, let us lower the windows of the doors on either side. Wait, I'll do it. 'Tis fitter work for a man's hands."

He was surprisingly dexterous, for in a moment, with my ear keenly attuned to catch the sound, I heard the window of the coach drop into its slide in the door. His hand caught the leather curtain to keep it from bellying out and betraying the opening.

"Madam," he whispered more softly than ever now that the window was open, "you will have to cross and hold the curtain while I attend to your window."

We passed each other with some difficulty in the narrow confines of the coach, but I did as he bade, wondering the while what his plan would be. My own window was more obdurate, but he finally got it down. It slipped from his hand, however, and fell with a crash. The men outside heard the noise, for Sir Percy cried instantly:

"What's the matter, Mistress Caroline?"

I had wit enough to answer.

"The window of the door became dislodged and fell," I replied quickly, as the coachman, apparently in obedience to some sign from his master, began checking his horses.

"Shall I put it up again?"

"No," said I, "I like the air."

"Will you come outside and ride?"

"Never," I replied. "Remember our bargain. I was to be alone, and——"

"Drive on, man!" cried Sir Percy angrily.

I think he would like to have had me outside with him, perhaps mounted on horseback or on the box of the coach. At any rate, the coach lurched on heavily again.

"Well," said my companion, "you are a rare woman, madam. That was done with the quickness and brilliance of a practiced campaigner."

I really thrilled with his praise. What was this common sailor to me that I should care for his good opinion?

"What next?" I asked.

"This. There is a horseman on either side of the carriage. I will take one, you the other. I think there are but two men on the box. They will be so surprised at the shots from the carriage that we will have perhaps not much difficulty in dealing with them afterwards."

"I—I have never killed anybody in my life," I began falteringly.

"Good God, madam, will you fail me now? 'Tis your only chance," he urged imperiously.

"But could I not shoot merely to wound?"

"Were your father here, madam, he would say, I know, that you shouldn't shoot until you have to, but when you have to, shoot to kill."

It sounded like a leaf out of that old veteran's book.

"I will do as you bid," I returned.

"Let me give the word, then. Is your pistol ready?"

"Just as you handed it to me," I replied.

"'Tis ready, then. My weapons are always ready," he

answered. Then he bent forward a little. I did likewise. "When I say 'Now,'" he whispered, drawing the curtain aside, "do you fire."

My heart was beating tremendously, and yet there was a certain wild excitement in it all. Sir Percy was on my side. He would find, when I sent a bullet straight at his heart, what it was to trifle with and insult a woman of my stamp. I would——

"Now," came the voice low and clear. At the instant the curtain opposite me was dragged aside. I followed the motions of my companion.

"Fire," he cried sharply.

A black bulk bobbed up and down in front of me. I pulled the trigger. The two reports were as one. They were followed by an oath, a scream, and then a second of silence. The bulk on my side had disappeared. There was a shout from the coachman's box ahead of us; the coach gave a fearful lurch, a dark body shot past my side of the door, the coach bounded forward, the horses were running away.

"Well done!" cried my companion. "Two are down and one apparently has been thrown from the box. The coachman is alone up there. I will attend to him."

"You will be killed," I cried, as he laid his hand on the door.

"Release me, madam. I know what I am about. I am a sailor, and have climbed on worse places than this."

But I would not let him go for the moment until he said imperiously:

"By Heaven, unhand me! Our position is no better than before unless I can get control of the carriage."

He shook himself free angrily and opened the door. How he did it I know not, but in truth the man had the agility of a cat. His legs kicked wildly in the opening for a moment, and then I heard him on the roof, and his voice came to me faintly:

"Bring your horses to a standstill"—I could imagine him shoving the muzzle of his weapon against the back of the frightened coachman—"or I'll blow your backbone out!"

"I'm doin' my best, sir," answered the coachman. "They're frightened at the shots, and——"

"Belay all that," cried the man, "your best isn't enough."

"But, good Lord, sir——"

"Clap a stopper on that jaw tackle and haul to those horses."

There must have been infinite persuasion in his stern and peremptory remarks, for by a mighty effort the coachman did succeed in bringing the horses to a standstill.

"Now," said the man, "lay your pistols on the seat beside you. That's well. How many were about this coach?"

"Four of us. Sir Percy and his man and the footman and myself."

"No more?"

"No more, sir. We thought that was enough for one woman."

"Hum, you didn't count on a man entering the game, did you?"

"No, sir."

"Now, you jump off this box and set your course down the road and leg out as fast as you are able. You will probably find your master dead down there, and his man and the footman—all together. What became of the footman?"

"He was throw'd from the box, sir, by the startin' of the coach when you fired, and——"

"Very good. No more back talk. Start."

"But the horses, sir?"

"Give me the reins, I'll take care of them."

My rescuer evidently reached forth to take the reins. The coachman stepped over the side. The carriage had stopped and, unknown to either of the men, I had stepped out. I wanted to hear what was going on, and was undecided whether to remain or flee. I might merely have got from the frying pan into the fire. The horses were restive, and they started forward just as the stranger took the reins. The coachman thought he saw his chance, for as he stood on the steps about to leap to the ground, his hand reached for the weapon which lay on the seat in front of him.

My deliverer could do nothing, but I was not helpless. I seized the coachman by the leg and jerked him violently backward. He had got his hands on the pistol, and it went off in the air. The horses started again, but sailor Brown held them with an iron hand. He trained the coachman's remaining pistol on him, and but for my en-

treaty he would have fired it into the prostrate man. Indeed, the driver was not in a condition to do any more injury, for the fall had half stunned him.

"Well done, madam!" cried the sailor from the box, "but for your interruption I had been a dead man. Now, if you please to mount beside me to the box here, we will be off again."

He reached down his hand toward me. I seized his palm with my own. He swung me up as if I had been a feather, although I am no slender slip of a girl, clicked to the horses, and off we went.

Was I still a captive, I wondered, and what was to be the end of this strange adventure?

CHAPTER THREE

WHEREIN THE ADVENTURE OF THE COACH IS CONCLUDED

IN spite of the unusual and still perilous situation in which I found myself, I had actually begun to take enjoyment in the rapid motion, but we had gone only a few furlongs when my companion rather abruptly reined in the horses. His next move filled me with astonishment not unmingled with alarm, for he turned the coach about in the road and drove back in the direction whence we had come.

"Sir," asked I, "what is the meaning of this change?"

"It has occurred to me," he replied, "that unless we have succeeded in killing everybody on or about the coach by our attack, we will be pursued."

"That is certain," I answered, "and furthermore we know that the coachman at least was alive."

"Yes, and the footman was probably only stunned. Are you sure you hit your man?"

"I am sure of nothing," was my answer. In fact, I recalled distinctly that I closed my eyes just as I pulled the trigger, but I would not have betrayed this for the world. "I am sure of nothing," I continued, "except

that I hit something, for the horse and rider went down."

"You were probably unlucky enough to strike the horse instead of the man," was the grim answer.

Unlucky! I was positively glad of it. Although I hated Sir Percy Reade, when it came to the actual point I did not wish to have his blood on my hands, and I secretly hoped that my bullet had hit the horse rather than him.

"And your man?" I questioned. "Did you——?"

"I do not think he will trouble us again, madam," was the prompt answer.

How cool, not to say bloodthirsty, was this stranger to whom I had committed my fortunes, and who was driving me hither and yon in the darkness without so much as a "By your leave, madam."

"What do you propose, then?"

"I propose to go back and have a look at our enemies."

"But if they should offer to take me once more?"

"I have little fear of that. Whether you hit Sir Percy or not, he must be terribly battered by the fall; the coachman has no weapons, and that would leave two of us to deal with the footman, which would be easy for me alone."

I positively thrilled at being thus associated with this cool, composed, assured adventurer.

"If you will hold the horses a minute," he continued, "I will take one of the lanterns and see if I can't find powder and ball somewhere to recharge our weapons."

He suited the action to the word, and was soon rum-

maging in the boot behind. Sir Percy's mails were closely strapped there, he told me. The baronet had evidently prepared for quite a journey. How he thought I was to get along without clothes was a matter I could not fathom. At any rate, a flask of powder and a bullet pouch were soon discovered, and the pistols were carefully recharged by my friend himself. I own I was never more curious in my life, and I tried desperately to get a glimpse of his face by the dim light of the coach lantern, but as he placed it in the body of the coach for convenience while he reloaded his weapons, I had no chance.

What sort of a man was he? Imagine my situation, alone at night on that deserted road with a man who had shown that he could kill without the slightest compunctions of conscience apparently, a man who declared himself a common sailor, yet whose demeanor was most uncommon for a sailor or anybody else. It was most provoking, and for a space feminine curiosity almost mastered my grief and anxiety.

"Now," said he at last, hooking the lantern into its place and swinging himself lightly to the box by my side, "here are three weapons. The coachman had a brace, but he took one with him. I shall give you one and retain the other two for myself."

He spoke to the horses, and we started off at a smart trot once more. We had gone but a short distance before we overtook the coachman plodding wearily along. He did not recognize us at first, and thinking it might be some one from whom he could obtain succor, he hailed. Slipping the reins to me once more, and bidding me re-

main quiet, my companion swung himself to the ground, pointed his pistol at the frightened coachman and mastered him in the twinkling of an eye.

"You are about the same build as I am, my man," said the sailor, "and I will trouble you to exchange coats with me."

The coachman protested, but his protests went for naught. My new friend had an overpowering way with him apparently, and in a trice the servant's livery coat was off; he had picked up his cocked and laced hat from the dust after we drove off, and it, too, was now deposited on the ground by the coat.

"Now, your boots, please," continued my preserver.

The other man was by this time too frightened to argue further, and I could judge by the noise that the boots joined the rest of the apparel. Indeed, I could make out the figures of the two men by the coach lanterns.

"Now I shall be under the painful necessity of blindfolding you and strapping you to a tree," resumed the stern voice of my unknown rescuer.

"Good Lord! your honor," cried the frightened menial, "what are you going to do to me?"

"Nothing at all, simply prevent your giving alarm."

"But why blindfold me, sir?"

"So that you can't see which way we go. Madam," the voice called up to me, "this gentleman and I are going into the woodland a little space to be unobserved from the road, and I shall be back directly."

I heard the two crashing off through the underbrush, and then there was a silence. For a moment the mad im-

pulse came upon me to turn the horses and drive off in the direction we had just come. I even drew the reins tighter and lifted the whip, but the impulse died as it was born. It was not the act of a soldier or of a soldier's daughter to desert a comrade, and certainly no one could have protected me more gallantly or taken my story more readily than this man had. He had certainly got himself into terrible difficulties on my account, and I could not desert him. Perhaps these facts might have weighed little against my impulse to fly had I not at the same time been overwhelmed with curiosity to see him, to know more of him, to place him, as it were. Surely never was woman in such a provoking position. Come what might, I would play out the game. I was ever of a venturesome disposition and fond of the unconventional, to Miss Clapperton's great distress. Besides, I had no place to go, no one to whom to appeal for aid.

"When you are in a game, my daughter," my father had been wont to say, "play it out to the end whatever betides."

He used to treat me like a boy, as if I had been the son whom fate had denied him in fact. Poor man, he had played his game out to the end, and a bitter end it was! Well, I would play mine out in the same way, and so I stayed quieting the horses until presently my companion came back. He clambered up by my side and took the reins once more, and back we went, this time more carefully and more slowly, for we had arrived by now, I judged, at no great distance from the point where we

had made our attack. I could not refrain from the temptation to remind my nonchalant traveling companion of what he owed to my forbearance.

"Did you expect to find me here on your return?" I asked.

"I was sure of it, madam."

"Why that? I might easily have spoken to the horses and driven away."

"You might have done so."

"And you could never have caught me."

"I should never have tried."

"And, indeed, sir, why not?"

"A comrade, a shipmate, who could abandon one who has done as much for him or her as I have done for you would not be worth pursuing."

There was so much truth in this rather caustic remark from a common sailor that I perforce kept silence. But he resumed after a pause:

"The matter is not worth discussing, for, after all, you could not have driven away."

"And why not?"

"Desertion, I take it, is not in your blood, madam."

It was the second time I had felt flattered that night. Truly this was impossible, and yet——

My thoughts were interrupted once more by the checking of the horses for the fourth time. The lantern light from the coach disclosed the dead body of a horse on one side of the road. My friend jumped to the ground and took the lantern with him for a close inspection.

"You missed," he said dryly, after examining the

horse. "You missed the man, that is. You struck the horse fair enough. He fell practically in his tracks."

"Thank God!" I cried in my heart, but all that I said was:

"And what was your fortune?"

He walked across the road.

"'Tis scarcely necessary," he remarked as he went. I saw him stoop down. "The man is dead," he continued in an even voice, as if such things were a matter of course.

"And Sir Percy?" I asked.

"Gone, and the groom, too. The groom evidently was only stunned. According to my reckoning, he came to his senses and assisted Sir Percy to some shelter. They have left the dead servant there by the roadside, and will probably send back for him. We must get out of here at once."

"Which way?" I asked, as he resumed his place and the reins.

"Just as we are going now. They will naturally think that we have gone the other way, and besides, if I know the lay of the land, this way will bring us into Portsmouth town. Unless these brutes are too fagged out, we should reach there before morning."

"And what then?"

"Madam, I must take ship for the United States immediately."

"And what is to become of me?" I asked, rather piteously I admit.

"I thought it was your purpose to voyage also to Virginia."

"Yes, but how can I go? I have no clothes; I have made no preparation."

"I cannot presume to determine your course, madam, but I should say that your safety should be of greater importance to you than any mere question of clothes. Sir Percy, I take it, has powerful friends——"

"And I have none," I said, with a sob.

"Your pardon, madam, you have one."

"And who is that, pray?" I asked innocently.

"Myself."

"Indeed, sir, you have shown yourself a good friend to me this night, but what can you do?"

"I am not without influence with the captain of the ship in which my passage is bespoke, although I shall be but a foremast hand aboard her, and I think I can—er—prevail upon him to give you passage to Virginia. 'Twill be rough fare and plain service, but you will be with honest hearts and true, and you will go in safety."

"But how am I to go with only the clothes that I stand in?" I asked, my mind reverting to the matter which was important to me, as any woman will understand.

"I have no doubt that such things as you need can be purchased in Portsmouth, and——"

"But I have no money."

This difficulty seemed to be an insuperable one.

"Have you anything of value on your person?" said my companion at last after some reflection.

"Jewelry in plenty," said I, "although most of it is safely locked up in my mails at the inn."

"Very well, then, if you will give a ring, or other trinket, to me when we get to Portsmouth, I make no doubt that I can provide you with sufficient for your necessities, unless they be greater than I imagine."

"Sir," said I with some asperity, though why should I have cared anything for this man's word or thoughts, "there is no woman in England, I believe, who can get along with less, on occasion, than I. I have observed that it is always those who are born to much that are able to dispense with all not necessary."

I was resolved, since fortune opened this way, to go to the Virginias on this ship. Once there, if my relative would give me welcome, measures could be concerted for recovering whatever was available from my estate and for bringing Sir Percy to justice. Indeed, I was utterly friendless, as I had said. There was no one to whom I could turn. I had enjoyed experience of the coldness of the world after my father's death, and I had received such a demonstration of the quality of the men who had flocked around him, in the conduct of my former lover, that I was sick of the male sex, and I never had much conceit of my own, which was too much *à la* Clapperton for my fancy.

I have not dwelt upon my grief for my father. Indeed, my needs, perils, and anxieties had largely dispelled it, or at least kept it in abeyance. I should feel it more keenly did I have safety in which to indulge the luxury of grief. Now my mind was bent upon escape. I thanked God again and again for having thrown me into the hands to which I now found myself committed.

Surely it was Providence that had brought my rescuer and me together so opportunely. If I could reward him in some way for all that he had done, I would surely do so. These thoughts flitted through my head as we drove along in silence, and when this last one found lodgment in my brain, I turned and gave it utterance with my lips.

"Sir," I said, "I know not how I can requite your kindness, but if ever a way does open, rest assured I shall avail myself of it."

"Pray, madam, do not mention it. 'Tis nothing," quoth he.

"Do you call it nothing," cried I, "to shoot a man down and to bind another— By the way, what did you do to the coachman?"

"I strapped him to the tree with a halter, blindfolded him and gagged him, left him my clothes and assumed his own."

"But he will starve to death," said I.

"Oh, no, some one will see him in the morning. He is not far from the road. He will manage to work his gag free by that time. I tied it rather loosely. Give yourself no concern for him."

"But why did you change coats with him?"

"I am your servant from now on, and must therefore wear your livery."

"Sir Percy Reade's livery, you mean," said I maliciously.

"'Tis ours, yours, that is, by right of conquest, madam," was the imperturbable reply.

"I am relieved," I returned. "I would that I could do

something to show my gratitude for the obligations you have conferred upon me which seem to reach clear across the ocean to America."

"You are an English lady, madam," said he; "if you would requite me for the little I have done, endeavor to think less meanly than your fellow countrywomen of our Americans."

"Indeed, sir," I answered, "if an ordinary American sailor can show himself thus gracious and considerate, I know not how I could appraise your gentlefolk."

He laughed dryly, and thanked me in a way which left me quite discomfited. What a singular man he was, and did they breed such a race of sailors in America? I confess I was mystified.

We had progressed some miles in the night, had long since passed the inn whence I had been taken a few hours before, and had now come to a small river.

"Do you know where this water leads?" he asked.

"I think it meets the sea at the town of Little Hampton."

"Good," said he. "I propose that we abandon the carriage here and take boat to the shore, thence we can easily get a boat to Portsmouth. Our trail will be lost, and no one will know where to look for us."

"The advice seems good," said I, "provided we can find a suitable boat in the river."

"There is a little town yonder," he said.

"It will be Arundel, I think," was my reply.

I was familiar with Sussex and Hants, having spent a part of my girlhood there.

"I can probably get a skiff there. Are you afraid to remain with the carriage for a few moments while I try?"

"I am afraid of nothing," I returned composedly enough, although my heart did sink a little at the prospect of being left completely alone at midnight on that lonely road.

"I shall be back in a short time," he said. "If anything happens, discharge your pistol, if necessary, and at anything that threatens."

He was off in a minute. There was a bridge across the stream, which was but a small one, near where we stood. I could hear his footsteps resounding upon its planks. He was gone but a short time, although it seemed long to me sitting there alone quaking at every creaking twig, for all my bold declarations, and on the point of firing my pistol at nothing a half dozen times. In fact, his return was so abrupt that I was fairly startled when his voice came to me out of the darkness.

"I've a skiff below the bridge," he said. "'Tis a small one, but it will serve for both of us."

"Did you get it without awakening suspicion?" I asked innocently enough.

"I got it without awakening its owner," he returned with a grim laugh.

"But that is stealing!" I cried.

"We common sailors, madam, have not your fine feelings," he answered. "This is the enemy's country, and we are fighting for your honor, and——"

"And what?" I asked as he paused.

"And my life!"

"Is it in such jeopardy, then?"

"Absolute, madam. But my peril is of no consequence, we must think only of yours. Will you come down from the box?"

What was I to do? Was this man some escaped criminal? I hesitated.

"The longer we delay, the more easy becomes pursuit," he said impatiently.

There was no help for it. I stepped toward him. He took me in his arms and lifted me down as though I had been a child. He was tremendously strong, this sailor.

"Wait you here a moment," he said. "I have things to do."

He swung the coach about so that its back rested toward the river. Then he unhitched the horses. Leaving the coach where it was, he led the horses across the narrow bridge, took the harness from each one—so I judged from the noise, and he afterwards told me that I had followed his motions correctly—threw it into the river, and with a few smart blows of his whip started the horses, happy in their freedom, down one of the roads on the opposite side. They were gone in the darkness in no time. Then he came back to where the coach was. He had cleverly backed it on the edge of the rather steep bank of the stream. Seizing the pole, he put forth his great strength and easily shoved it into the river, where it toppled over and lay a sodden wreck.

"This will puzzle and amuse Sir Percy if he chances

to pick up our course," he remarked. "Now for the boat."

He offered me his hand and helped me down the steep bank. Unluckily, I slipped in the ooze and he caught me in his arms, else I should have fallen. Having once got me there with no more ado than if I were a sack of flour, he deposited me in the stern of the little boat, scrambled into it himself, broke out the oars, and we were adrift upon the still waters of the little river.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN WHICH THE LACKEY'S PART IS INDIFFERENTLY ASSUMED

THERE was no doubt about the man's being a sailor, or perhaps I should better say a waterman, for I had been around ships a little and on the water often, and I never saw a more finished oarsman. The river was a sluggish one—it may have been that the tide was in and the current was almost checked—but nevertheless we drove through the water at a great pace.

The motion of a boat on the water has always delighted me—there must be some trace of salt in my blood—and I have ever loved the sea. That is one reason I was so interested in this unknown sailor. The night was pleasant for all its darkness. I leaned back in the stern sheets and gave myself over to reflection with the heedlessness of youth.

Three weeks since I had been the happiest girl alive, honored, courted, flattered, pursued, engaged, the yoke of that latter tie sitting but lightly upon me. Then with the suddenness of a lightning flash had come my father's death, the knowledge that I was penniless, the bitter awakening of persons in such sort, especially

women, to the hollowness and insincerity of the friendships of a world like that in which we moved; and after that the shattering of hope and trust in humanity by the base and outrageous conduct of my lover, which had culminated in the attack of the night.

And yet I was not altogether unhappy, for as the good and evil mingle in the world, so the man who had assumed charge of my fortunes, by his courage and conduct and a certain direct ability to grapple with any situation, bade fair to restore some of my confidence in man. The spirit of adventure which had led my father to the East Indies had descended to me, I think, and I was really enjoying the present situation. I believe, despite Miss Clapperton's arduous training, her rigorous insistence upon the strictest letter of the proprieties, that I was built—dare I confess it?—for a hoyden. I did not realize until I had escaped it how the butterfly life I had led had palled upon me. I recalled now that among my acquaintances I was the only one, so far as my knowledge ran, who had never enjoyed a fit of the vapors or had hysterics. Perhaps that was the reason so many men had liked me. I was an upstanding, downright sort of a woman by nature, I suppose, and the few years' association with my father, who was practically an old bachelor and very much of a man's man, had rather accentuated these tendencies, Miss Clapperton's training to the contrary notwithstanding. I was not much given to introspection either, and I believe I did more of it this night than I had ever done in my life before.

My mental vagaries were interrupted from time to time by thoughts of the man before me. As he bent to and fro over the oars, I could catch a glimpse of his person, but I had no adequate knowledge of his face or figure. That he was strong and active of course I knew, but that was about all. He might almost be a Blackamoor for aught I could say then. Well, I should have ample opportunity to get acquainted with him on the long voyage to the Virginias.

What a pity he was not a gentleman! William Brown! I wondered how he spelled it. There were some Brownes in Sussex—no, this man was an American, and most Americans were so ineffably common—except of course the Virginians, though I had heard that the men of Massachusetts bore themselves proudly, for what reason I could not say. I wondered why the man rowed there without saying anything. It was most provoking. I determined that I should not be the first to break the silence. I must pull myself together, I realized, and resume my proper station with relation to him. Engaged in this valiant effort, I presently slipped down farther in the boat, and lulled by the soft lap of the waters around the bows, I fell fast asleep.

I must have slept some hours, for when I opened my eyes it was daylight. I lay a moment staring at the green tree-decked bank slipping rapidly by, and tried to think where I was. Presently remembrance came to me, and I instantly sat up.

Positively the man was good looking! Not that I would call him handsome exactly, and his dress was not

calculated to set him off in my eyes, but he was undeniably good looking, remarkably so for a man of his class. I took him in with a single glance. I marked the dark curly hair, tied in a club behind just like a common sailor, his dark complexion, a dash of color enlivening the brown of his cheek, his brilliant black eyes which looked at me boldly for a man of his rank, his handsome nose and mouth. Well, it does not take experience long to appraise an individual, and I decided at once that I approved of him. I suppose I stared at him rather longer and more directly than I thought, for it was he who broke the silence.

"Madam, I hope you find yourself somewhat refreshed?"

"Yes," said I vaguely, "I must have slept a long time."

I looked down toward my feet, over which lay a tumbled heap which I recognized to be the laced coat of Sir Percy's coachman.

"You covered me over with your coat evidently?" I continued.

"There is a heavy dew sometimes in these late spring mornings, and I thought you might catch cold."

"But you needed it yourself."

"Not I. Rowing is warm work."

"And you have not stopped the whole night?" I asked.

"I have not dared to. I must get to Portsmouth today. And if there were not a compelling necessity upon

me, I think it would be equally necessary for you to get there."

"Quite true. And do you know where we are now?"

"If you will look ahead," he answered—and I wondered with a sudden flush whether he had noticed that I had looked at nothing but him since I awakened—"you will see the steeples of a little seaport town. I think that must be Little Hampton."

"I am quite sure of it," I replied, shading my eyes with my hand and staring ahead. "What is the time?"

"I have no watch," he answered.

"And mine is back at the inn with my other things."

"I take it to be about four of the clock."

"Will not that be too early to get a boat?"

"Not for our purpose, madam," he returned.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to steal one."

"But why not hire one? I will be no party to a theft," I said indignantly.

"Have you any money?" he asked.

"Not a shilling," I answered, "my purse is with my watch."

"Exactly, and so is mine; therefore we must steal if we are to get to Portsmouth, where we can raise some money on that ring of yours—or perhaps you have some less treasured jewel?"

His glance fell upon my finger, where, as it chanced, I was still wearing Sir Percy Reade's diamond. I had absolutely forgotten that I had the hateful thing on

my hand, and my attention being called to it, I tore it off and tossed it to him.

"I loathe this ring," I cried. "It burns my finger."

He stopped rowing a minute, picked it up and put it carefully in his waistcoat pocket.

"Only a very great lady," he smiled, "would throw diamonds around like that."

"And is that the only evidence you have that I am a great lady?" I asked.

"How should a poor sailor be able to judge of a great lady except by her extravagances?" he returned.

"True," said I, although I could feel that there was mockery in his remark, "it is only by what we give or throw away that the humble value us."

I would not allow this man to make fun of me. No obligation that I had incurred would warrant that, and so I drew myself up with haughty reserve so far as a woman could do so who was sitting in the stern sheets of a small boat not four feet from the man whom she wished to reduce to insignificance by her demeanor.

"I have scruples," I said at last, "about appropriating people's property, but——"

"I have none whatever at this juncture," returned my companion composedly, "and in fact," he turned his head, "I see a rather likely looking sailboat yonder which I think will quite suit our purpose."

"You had best resume your coat, I think," I continued, thrusting it to him with my foot.

As I did so there fell from its pockets a purse. I pounced upon it with avidity, and opening it eagerly

I turned out into my hand a little heap of coin, two guineas, a crown piece, some shillings and a few pennies. Clearly our coachman was a Crœsus among lackeys. No wonder he objected strenuously to parting with his garments.

"See," I cried, "we won't have to steal a boat now. Here is money with which to pay."

"The coachman's money!" said the provoking man.

My face fell.

"True, I had forgotten that," I said in some confusion.

"My advice is," continued the oarsman, "that we—er—appropriate the boat and the money as well. The money will come in usefully in Portsmouth, and perhaps save you the ring."

"As for the ring," I cried, "I hate it, and I will steal as little as possible. We will use the coachman's money to rent the boat. 'Tis much more honorable."

"As you please," he returned coolly, "and perhaps your course may be the better, after all, since it will enable us to go ashore and get something to eat. You must be hungry after this exciting night."

"I am, I admit it. And you?"

"I have had nothing to eat since yesterday morning, and I confess to a most unromantic appetite."

Unromantic! What could the man mean by such language?

"Very well, then, do you suppose we can get anything to eat at this hour?" I asked. "Will the inn be open?"

"You have in your hand a key which will open any inn in the land," he laughed.

As he spoke—for we had now arrived abreast the town—he swung the boat in and it was soon grinding alongside the wharf. Taking a turn of the painter around one of the spiles, he scrambled up on the wharf, reached down, caught me by the hands, and in a moment I stood by his side. He had put on the coachman's coat and hat. He had previously assumed the man's boots, which I observed were several sizes too large for him. And there we stood in the bright morning, a rather disheveled, wind-blown young lady, attired in the extreme of the mode for traveling, but without a hat, and a sturdy, tall—I am not a small woman, and he was head and shoulders taller than I; he must have been all of six feet—stalwart-looking lackey. I should have given the directions, but I looked to him.

"What now?"

"There is an inn yonder. We go to it. I knock upon it and ask for breakfast. After we have eaten, we rent a boat and leave immediately."

"But who am I?" I asked. "Is it safe for me to announce myself, if the question be asked, as Miss Caroline Martindale?"

My companion thought deeply.

"I assumed this livery," he said, "not because I like it. We Americans don't take to it as a rule, even common sailors like myself, but in order to account for my presence with you. I suppose that the livery will be known around here, will it not?"

"Undoubtedly," I answered; "Sir Percy Reade is a great person in Sussex and Hants."

"Very well, suppose you say you are Lady Caroline Reade, Sir Percy's wife; that you were traveling to Portsmouth, and that your coach broke down on the river bank; that you left your footman to watch it and rowed down the river with me to take boat here for the town."

"'Tis a most unlikely story," I answered.

He nodded.

"I will persuade them that 'tis credible enough. Do you leave that to me, madam."

"Very good," said I, quite convinced of the adequacy of his persuasive powers.

And off we started, he a few paces in the rear as became his rank and station, real or assumed. We were not long in arriving at the door of the only inn of the little hamlet which was tightly closed. My companion drew one of his pistols and hammered loudly on it with the butt until the echoes rang. Presently a window in the second story was opened, and out came a fat-jowled and stupid-looking head.

"What do you want hammering at my door at this hour?" cried an angry, if sleepy, voice.

"Breakfast for this lady and a boat to Portsmouth on the instant."

"Breakfast will not be ready for two hours yet. 'Tis scarce four, and——"

"Hark ye, Master Landlord," cried my friend, "this is the wife of Sir Percy Reade involved in an accident.

She must have breakfast and a boat to Portsmouth. You had best come down immediately."

He reinforced his rather peremptory command by flashing one of the guineas before the landlord's eyes.

"Directly," said the man, although in no very pleasant tone of voice.

He withdrew his head and shut the window.

"He seems to be in a bad humor, this landlord," I remarked.

"We care nothing for his humors," was the somewhat abrupt answer. "What we want is his breakfast, and that smartly."

In a moment the door opened.

"The household's asleep," said the landlord, standing before us buttoning his coat as he did so, "but I'll try to find something for your ladyship."

"We want the best immediately," thundered my coachman, thrusting past the landlord into the taproom of the inn. "This way, my lady," he said.

"Was there ever such a coachman on earth?" must have run through the landlord's mind as he stood gaping at us.

"Sirrah, bestir yourself," said my man when he had got me safely seated.

"Sirrah! Sirrah!" sputtered the angry landlord, "I'd have you know that I take such words from no coachman on earth, by Gad, not even though he be his Majesty's driver."

"William," I began with my loftiest air, and was greatly surprised that nobody paid any attention to me.

"Brown," I said sharply.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, were you speaking to me?"

"Certainly, that's your name, isn't it?"

"Of course, madam."

"Well, then, leave me to arrange matters with the landlord," I said smoothly, whereat Brown, with a very surprised look in which amusement after a time overcame amazement, subsided and came to my back.

"We grieve indeed to trouble you, landlord," said I.

"No trouble at all, your ladyship," he interrupted.

"But if you can procure me a cup of tea——"

"Certainly, madam, and eggs and a rasher of bacon and some good wheat bread, and——"

"That will do admirably."

"Will your ladyship be pleased to go into the parlor?"

"No, as I am in a great hurry, our carriage having overturned up the river a space, I will wait here and beg that you will use your best speed to serve me promptly."

"That I will, your ladyship, that I will," he continued, bustling off, shooting a glance of supreme contempt at my coachman as he passed.

Left alone together, I settled myself back in my seat and calmly surveyed him from head to heel as he stood before me. I have observed that nothing so disquiets the ordinary man as to be inspected in that way by a woman. I say by a woman, because he would not tolerate it from a brother man.

"Brown," I began, "don't you think your manners are a little presuming for a coachman?"

"A coachman, madam!" he cried, stepping forward impetuously.

I raised my hand.

"There, there!" I said, "I meant not only your manner toward the landlord, but your manners toward your mistress. So long as you pretend to be in my employ, you must play out the game."

He bit his lip and bowed profoundly. Where did American sailors get such manners, I wonder?

"True, madam, I have the heart of a free sailor instead of a cringing lackey, but I shall do my best in your service to simulate the qualities of the latter. Have I your permission, madam," he continued ironically, "to go out and look for a suitable boat?"

"You have," I returned loftily.

He bowed again and strode from the room. It was really delicious to tame the tiger in this way. I had ever loved to play with man, and I had never had a pleasanter plaything than this one.

My meditations were interrupted by the speedy arrival of the landlord, who set before me a smoking breakfast, which I am not ashamed to say I attacked vigorously. In the midst of it my coachman came back. He had forgotten his rôle apparently, for he came straight to the table, seized a chair, and was about to seat himself by my side. I had always heard that the manners of Americans were free and easy, but this was beyond belief.

"Brown!" I cried sharply, checking him as he started to sit down.

"Fellow," bellowed the landlord, "this is for your betters."

The man turned upon him fiercely.

"Betters," he said, "I would have you know, sir——"

"One moment," I interposed, "since when has the coachman dined with the lady? Your place is in the kitchen, sir, and I beg that you will go there at once."

I wondered what kind of table manners the young man had. I should have enjoyed pursuing my investigations further by seeing him at meat. Perhaps that is one of the places where the true gentleman can be more easily discerned than any other. With a muttered oath, however—at least it sounded like that, though it was carefully muffled—he turned and strode away toward the kitchen; the landlord remained looking at me.

"Egad, madam," he said, "the impudence of these modern servants is monstrous."

"Quite so," I replied, "but if you will allow me to give you a word of advice, if you have care for your larder, I think you would better attend my man at once, else I shall not be answerable for the consequences."

The landlord left me immediately, and I heard sounds of an altercation in the kitchen which amused me but did not concern me.

Before I had finished my meal, a sleepy maid came dragging into the taproom. By her I was shown to a chamber where I could wash my face and hands—thank

God I needed neither paint nor powder—and freshen myself a bit. From her also I bought a hat, a shapeless thing of straw, which, however, became me well enough, I observed, before I purchased it for a shilling. Then I descended to the taproom once more. There awaiting me was the faithful Brown. He started when I entered the room. I flattered myself that I had made a decided change for the better in my appearance.

"Are you ready, madam?" he said formally.

"I am," I replied.

"Landlord, your bill?" he said, turning to the other.

"'Tis here, coachman."

"Pay yourself out of that, innkeeper," said my major domo, handing the landlord a guinea, "and you can keep the change."

The host, overwhelmed by such unexpected munificence, stepped aside respectfully, and bowed low before the door as I passed out into the street.

"This way, your ladyship," continued my man, pointing toward the wharf.

"You gave away my money like a lord," said I.

"The coachman's money, you mean."

"'Tis the same thing. Why did you do it?"

"'Tis the force of your example, madam," returned he.

"We have so little of it at present," I continued.

"We can always steal more," he remarked. "The world is full of—coachman and others who have money for the taking."

"Where is the boat?" I asked, conscious that at this repartee I was not shining particularly.

"At the wharf yonder."

"How did you get it?"

"With the other guinea," he returned. "That and the magic of your name."

"My name! I did not know it was known in these parts."

"Sir Percy Reade's, I mean. With his name and your diamond, we can go far, madam."

"That happens to be Sir Percy Reade's also."

"Good!" laughed my companion. "I have his livery, his ring, his name, and his promised wife. What hath he left?"

This calm assumption of possession startled me, but I could think of nothing to say at the moment, and indeed he gave me no time, for he went on:

"He hath left only his honor, it strikes me."

"He never had any of that," I commented.

By this time we were in the boat, the sail of which had been already hoisted.

My, shall I say, captor—indeed it looked like it!—stepped aft, thrust the boat away, hauled aft the sheet, seized the tiller and away we went toward Portsmouth town.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GOOD USES OF AN ENGAGEMENT RING

THE distance from Little Hampton to Portsmouth as the crow flies is little more than a score of miles. We had to weather Selsey Bill, however, which would lengthen the distance to a scant ten leagues. Fortunately there was a splendid breeze blowing down the channel. My guide, with a sailor's prescience, had picked out from several that offered a fast boat which he said could reel off eight knots an hour at least in such a wind as then blew. It was past five o'clock when we left Little Hampton; before nine we should be at Portsmouth if the breeze held. At least that was the word which came from the new captain of the little ship that carried me and my fortunes. It would take him a short time to realize on Sir Percy's diamond at some pawnbroker's, he added, and he would allow me a couple of hours to complete my shopping. Noontime, therefore, should see us safely aboard the ship, which, I was informed, was only waiting my companion's arrival before getting under way.

Brown was in a surly mood. He did not respond to my efforts at conversation. Although I was exceedingly anxious to get him to talk about himself, I was unsuccessful in the attempt, and finally, with some indigna-

tion and resentment, I curled up in the cockpit of the little cutter on some boat cushions and a spare sail which he arranged for me, and drawing the maid's straw hat over my face, I went to sleep again and did not wake up until we were abreast Southsea, a half-hour's run to the harbor.

"What's to be done now?" I asked, seeing that we would soon be in the town.

While at the inn I had been ready and able to play the mistress, but at sea I was more or less under the direction of my companion.

"You carried off your part," he answered, "with such spirit and success at Little Hampton that I can think of nothing which would better serve our purpose than a continuation of our plan."

"I thank you for the compliment," quoth I, "and I would that I could return it, but I never saw anyone fill the part of coachman so ill as you do, and it may be pertinent here for me to give you a lesson in behavior," I ran on, my head tilted well up in the air, although I was at a disadvantage, as I was sitting down and he was standing up, with his hand on the tiller looking very composed and, it must be confessed, somewhat indifferent.

"And pray, madam, what lesson is that you would give me?"

"'Tis this, sir. Although Providence has thrown me upon your hands, I would have you bear in mind the difference between our stations. Some of the best blood in England runs through my veins."

"I can well believe that," he interrupted with an admiring glance which I passed by.

"And although I am in a measure helpless and at your mercy, I am not entirely without friends, to wit: Major Thomas Martindale, of Eastcourt, on the James River in Virginia."

"Exactly so," he rejoined with asperity, "but before you can claim his protection, madam, I must get you there."

"I know that," I replied, "and I am quite willing to trust myself to your guidance. You have shown yourself to be a true, honorable man, if a somewhat unruly and bloodthirsty one."

"Had I been more mercifully inclined, madam, you would not be here."

"I realize all that perfectly," I continued, "and I realize my obligation to you, the obligation you have laid me under as well, but I would have you remember that there is a difference in station between us; that I am the daughter of a distinguished British soldier, and that you are——"

I hesitated.

"A plain American sailor, madam, as you have seen fit to remind me," he continued quickly. "Though in America we do not pay so much attention to differences in rank and station as you do in England."

"But this is not America," I replied.

"True," was the answer, "and I shall endeavor to remember it. If I have, in my desire to serve you, transgressed the proprieties and presumed upon your con-

descension, I beg you will pardon it. I shall not offend again."

He was the most vexing man I ever came in contact with.

"Perhaps," I faltered after a time, "I have misjudged you. It may be that you are above your apparent station in life."

"And what think you is my apparent station in life?" he asked quickly.

"Why I—I confess—that I——"

"You never gave it a thought?"

"Quite so," I answered, although what I said was not true.

"Well, my apparent station in life is absolutely in accord with my words. I am a sailor charged by certain important people with the delivery of certain valuable papers, so charged because I happened to be handy and about, I suppose. There are persons in your country who would stick at nothing to prevent the delivery of those papers which I have here. My trust in you, madam, is the trust that the humble should always repose in the great. You see I am concealing nothing."

I bowed at this singular statement, and remarked:

"I shall not betray you, of course. That is the least I can do in return for your kindness."

"I was sure of it when I revealed my errand to you."

"Are these papers so valuable, then?"

"So valuable that my life would not be worth an instant's purchase if those interested in stopping their delivery could lay hands upon me. Indeed, I fled from

London, and was hotly chased from there until I shook off my pursuers and took refuge in that lucky coach at the inn yard where you found me. I think this little adventure we have shared together has thrown my pursuers off the track, and I apprehend no further difficulty in getting aboard ship."

"And after that?" I asked.

"That's as may be. The seas swarm with your cruisers. They have the nasty habit of overhauling our peaceful traders and taking thence what they like. We have borne it as best we might, but we will bear it no longer. These papers"—he tapped his breast—"will settle that."

"And they mean?"

"War, madam."

His face flushed, his eyes flashed, he threw his head back as he said it, the beau ideal of a fighting man. Surely there must be some mistake about my companion. He could not be just a common sailor. And yet——

"You speak like a man-of-war's man," I replied.

"I have served on a man-of-war," he answered.

"An English man-of-war?"

"Certainly not," came the swift return. "I was a mid—a ship's boy under Truxton in the beginning of the century, and saw one or two smart brushes with the enemy, who happened in that instance to be the French."

"That was some twelve years since," I remarked. "How old are you?"

It was an impertinent question and absolutely none

of my business in some conditions, but proper enough from a woman of my station to a man in his.

"Twenty-six, madam. You, I take it, are considerably younger."

"I should say so," I remarked impetuously, "but my age can be no concern of yours, sir."

"As much as mine is to you."

I was sensible at once that I had overstepped the proprieties, and yet I scarcely knew how to make amends. By this time we were fairly in the harbor, which was crowded with boats, ships, wherries, and all sorts of craft. My companion seemed to find occupation enough in handling the vessel, which he did to perfection. I could not but admire the skill with which he threaded his way through the crowded channel. He never touched anything, and finally drew up alongside one of the wharves, made fast the boat, helped me ashore, arranged to have the cutter taken care of until called for by the owner in accordance with the directions he had received at Little Hampton, and then resumed as best he could his coachman's manner with his coachman's coat. He indicated that I should precede him up the wharf to one of the most respectable of the inns facing the harbor.

Having seen me safely bestowed in the best chamber, he left me, as he said, to raise what money he could on the diamond. He had a masterful and persuasive way about him evidently, for in a very short time he was back at the inn with a handful of guineas, twenty in number. It was a small price for such a stone,

but the best that could be done under the circumstances, and much better than I had anticipated. It would suffice for all my needs.

"Now, madam," he said as he put the gold in my hands, "this is the best I could do for you. I have no doubt it will be adequate for your wants."

"More than enough," replied I, scanning the gold, "and indeed much more than I expected."

"'Tis now on the stroke of ten. The tide will turn about eight bells, at twelve o'clock I mean, and the ship on which we are to go leaves as soon thereafter as the anchor can be got aweigh. This will leave you two hours to make your purchases. You have been on the sea before?"

I nodded.

"I have been to France."

He smiled as if that were not much.

"You will know what to get, then?"

"Of course," I replied.

"Our voyage will take us perhaps a month, or maybe more. We should reach the Chesapeake early in June if fortune favor us, but as the night air at sea is sometimes chilly, you will have to provide yourself with one comfortable wrapping at least."

"Thank you," I replied, "I shall avail myself of your forethought. Have you made arrangements for my passage?"

"Not yet," was the answer, "I shall do that while you are at your purchases."

"Am I to go on this expedition alone?" I asked,

somewhat alarmed, as it was not the custom for ladies of my rank and station to parade the streets unattended.

"I have arranged for that," he said. "One of the maids at the inn will accompany you. You know that you are the wife of Sir Percy Reade. And by the way, the *Porcupine* lies in the harbor yonder ready for a cruise."

"I am glad indeed that her commander isn't here."

"I could wish for both our sakes that your bullet had gone into him instead of his horse. It was a shame to kill a good horse anyway when you had a chance at such a blackguard."

"I did my best," I answered, which was not quite true, for no one can do her best who does it with her eyes shut. But the answer served.

"There's no use repining about it now," he went on. "I shall meet you here shortly before twelve o'clock. Please, if you value your safety"—he said nothing about his own—"don't delay."

"I shall be here promptly, never fear. How about your safety?"

"In this disguise," he smiled and lifted the skirts of his livery, "I think few would recognize me, and I doubt if I am in any danger whatsoever. And now, if I am to make arrangements, I must go. The maid awaits you in the parlor of the inn."

I felt a strange reluctance to see this young man leave. There was something about him that was reassuring. When he was by I felt absolutely safe. I knew

that he would extricate me from any danger in which I might fall. When he was away, matters were different. Here I was alone—and by virtue of my dependence upon this stranger feeling more than ever my loneliness—in the town of Portsmouth, with which I had no familiarity whatsoever. Still there was nothing to be done. I had to put a bold face on it. I would die rather than confess to a feeling of timidity. And so I bade him good-by with an assumption of lightness which I did not feel, and at once made preparations for my shopping expedition.

There was some compensation in that. 'Tis said that even a widow will find alleviation for her grief in the purchase of her mourning, and I was by no means in that condition. The maid who had been secured for my attendance was neat and serviceable, and knew the best shops in the town, and I confess that as nothing happened in the course of the morning, my fears vanished, and I really enjoyed it.

I made such purchases as my experience dictated, and took the precaution to have the maid carry them with her back to the inn. They made monstrous bundles, but I could not trust to have them sent by the mercers, shoemakers, and milliners whom I visited, lest they should be too late for our departure, and although the temptation was great, I kept my ardor within bounds, and quarter of twelve found me mounting the stairs toward my chamber at the inn. I said quarter to twelve, indeed I think it lacked probably nearer twenty-five minutes to the hour than fifteen.

Halfway up the stairs, which were open and from which a full view of the taproom could be had, the landlord observed me. He came running toward me and stopped me with a gesture.

"Your ladyship," he said, "I have good news for you."

"Indeed, sir, and what may that be?"

"Half an hour ago, madam, your husband arrived, and expressed great surprise and delight that you had preceded him."

"Where is he now?" I cried faintly, shrinking back against the wall and dropping half my parcels, which the ready maid at once picked up.

"I showed Sir Percy to your chamber, madam, and he awaits you there. He bade me show you to him so soon as you returned."

As he spoke, the man stepped on the stairs, his huge bulk filling the narrow stairway. What was I to do? I could not drop my things and turn, and run away from my own husband, so to speak. The taproom was filled with people. They stopped and stared at me. There was nothing to do but go on. How I wished for Brown! What would he have done in such an emergency? I could not tell. Slowly I ascended the stairs. The maid opened the door of the room, deposited my parcels, and with a courtesy withdrew, leaving me to enter alone. There composedly sitting in the easiest chair was the person above all others whom I did not want to see, Sir Percy Reade.

CHAPTER SIX

WHEREIN AN UNEXPECTED HUSBAND TURNS UP

GAD, madam," he exclaimed as I entered the room, "if this isn't the most fortunate of meetings—an unexpected pleasure indeed! I leave you in a coach galloping madly over a Sussex road twelve hours ago; I find you this morning in an inn at Portsmouth proclaiming yourself my wife. A little premature and unnecessary in that proclamation, my dear," he ran on as I stared at him speechless. "We have put all thoughts of weddings out of our ken, but nevertheless I'm glad to see you. You saucy little baggage, what brought you here, and what sort of a trick was it you sought to play on me anyway? Why, that bullet of yours just grazed my leg, and the fall of the horse knocked me as senseless as a dead flounder. How you managed to do that, and then turn and shoot poor Jenkins dead, I don't know. That's murder, my dear, murder by the law of England, you know," he went on with sudden gravity while I stood quaking before him. "I have the weather gauge on you now, madam. But I can't understand it. Where the pistols came from is a mystery to me. However, poor Jenkins is dead, and I have you now just where I thought to have you.

Now tell me all about it. But give me a kiss first, and——"

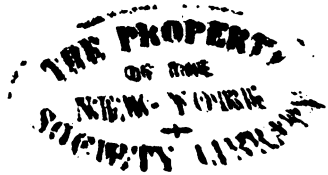
"You villain!" I cried, "you double-dyed, cowardly villain! I know not what trick of fate, what unkind Providence hath thrown me in your power again, but I wish now that I had kept my eyes open when I pulled the trigger and had pointed the weapon at your heart."

"Fair and softly, madam, fair and softly! Perhaps you don't realize exactly your position."

"And what is my position, sir?"

"Attended by my coachman, you have presented yourself at this inn as my wife, although how you persuaded the fellow to lend himself to the deception, I know not. You are known here by a dozen persons as my lady, and you have put yourself beyond the possibility of asking help. I have covered your motions. I learn that you arrived here shortly before ten; that with one of the maids of the inn you went out shopping; that your coachman left you for some devices of his own—and I shall have some questions to ask him when he comes back, by the way—and that you are but now returned. As my wife, which you have declared yourself to be, you are estopped from asking the aid of any who under other circumstances might be inclined to interfere and to protect a helpless female. As a woman who has shot my groom, Jenkins, if necessary, I have only to lay information against you for that charge, and you will be clapped into jail."

"And I," I said flaming, "have only to say that you were trying to kidnap me when I fired the shot."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"Oh," laughed he, "trying to kidnap my own wife! Absurd."

"No more absurd than a husband charging his wife with murder," replied I. "No, Sir Percy, the game is not altogether in your hands, I fancy."

"So," laughed the baronet, "we shall see. Meanwhile, will you kindly tell me where you got the pistols, what has become of my coach, and the whole story?"

As he paused for a reply, laughing maliciously—heavens, how could I have ever loved this man, or thought that I did, the unmitigated scoundrel that he was! And yet he had a handsome air, too. I reflected that if I was to get out of my present desperate situation, it would only be by the help of the man who had extricated me from the former one. It surely must be verging on twelve by now. I expected him to open the door at any minute. And then! Well, then it would go hard if the two of us could not overpower Sir Percy and get away. But until he did arrive, I must keep the reptile in play. All this passed through my mind swiftly.

"If you will first tell me how you got here, I will answer your questions," I said at last.

"That's easy," returned the baronet. "When I came to my senses, I was picked up by the footman, who had been thrown from the carriage when the horses started at the sound of your pistol shots. He assisted me to a cottage near by, and after a few hours' rest I got horses and came posting to Portsmouth, intending to start a hue-and-cry after you and the coach. By hard

galloping I arrived here shortly after you did, came to this inn, learned that you were here, and here I am. Fortune favors the brave, you see."

"The favors of Fortune," I replied, "are distributed with an impropriety only justified by her blindness."

"Very good," cried the baronet, slapping his leg, "very neat. I like a woman of spirit and repartee, by Gad!"

"Do you so?" I replied, not at all flattered by these remarks. "Well, as to how I escaped your clutches, you shall have the whole story. There was——"

I paused.

Sir Percy sat with his back to the window. His thumbs were in his waistcoat, one leg crossed over the other; he was tilted back in his chair with a most approved air of easy-going superiority. I had not deigned to sit down. I stood with my back to the door, with Sir Percy between me and the window, which was open. As I spoke, a hand appeared over the window ledge, and then a head. It was Brown. Never had I seen a more beautiful thing than his face at that moment, although it was strained and contorted with the violent effort of drawing himself up to enter the room and not make a noise or give any warning of his presence in the process.

The chamber assigned to me overlooked a corner of the courtyard which providentially happened to be deserted, and which was not covered by any of the other windows in the inn. How he came there, or what he proposed, I could not tell, but there was reassurance in the sight of him. His hands were both engaged, and

he could make no signal, but I divined instantly from the way he compressed his lips that he desired me not to discover to Sir Percy his approach.

"Well," said the baronet with a great air of patronizing curiosity, "what are you waiting for? Go on, pray."

"I am thinking how best to put it to you," replied I, playing for time and thrilling with excitement at what was about to happen.

"Choose any way. I'm a man of indifferent understanding, but I think I can comprehend a plain tale," he went on with his disgusting complacency and self-conceit.

"And a plain tale you shall have," I returned. My heart beat so that it was like to choke me. I spoke loudly, too, to cover any possible noise, and stared directly at Sir Percy to hold his attention. "As a matter of fact the lines around my hands were loosely passed. I succeeded in getting one hand free. You know my hands are small."

"Indeed, I do, madam," chuckled the baronet.

"There were two pistols in holsters on either side of the front seat."

Now it so happened that there had been two pistols in this place, although I knew nothing of it, and of course I had not used them.

"How stupid of Jenkins not to have removed them!" interrupted Sir Percy frowning. "Well, he's paid for his error with his life. Go on!"

"You remember the noise of the lowering of the

window which caused you to question. I lowered it on purpose, both sides."

I was staring beyond the baronet now at my sailor, who, with movements as quiet as those of a cat, had got himself up on the broad sill of the window.

"It was the work of a moment to fire at you with one pistol and then at your man with the other," I ran on swiftly in great excitement I strove in vain to master. "After that, I jumped out of the coach at the risk of my life. And here I am," I ended.

"It was well done," cried the baronet. "I like your spirit. And now, my dear——"

He started to rise to his feet. At that instant the sailor's hands caught him by the back of the neck and closed around his throat. The baronet was a big, powerful man, and he struggled desperately for a few seconds, but nothing availed against that iron grasp. His face turned black, his eyes started from his head.

"For Heaven's sake!" I cried, appalled at the silent struggle, for one man made no sound and the other could not, "do not kill him before my eyes."

"It's throwing away a chance to let him live, madam," growled my sailor.

"I cannot have him murdered before my eyes," I cried imperiously.

"Look the other way, then," was the startling reply.

"Nay, nay, release him, I beg you. He is almost dead now."

Reluctantly, it seemed to me, at my behest the sailor relaxed his grasp. Sir Percy sank back in a chair gasp-

ing, incapable of speech or motion, almost without breath.

My man had kept behind him during the whole of the struggle, and he remained there still, having evidently some reason for not being seen and recognized. Meanwhile, he rapidly unbuckled his belt, which was a long heavy leather one such as seamen use, with plenty of slack, and forcing Sir Percy into the heavy oak chair, he rapidly strapped him to it. He next took from the wash-hand stand in the corner of the room a coarse towel. This he tore into strips and improvised a gag, which he forced between the helpless baronet's teeth and tied tightly behind his head. Then with one of my kerchiefs he blindfolded the man. This done, he stepped around in front.

"I came in the nick of time, madam."

"Indeed, you did!" I cried hysterically, sinking back upon a chair. "I cannot bear to think of what might have happened had you not been here."

"I reached the inn a few moments after you did, and learned that my master"—he grinned ironically—"had preceded me, and was waiting in your chamber. Fortunately, I had observed that the window of your room overlooked this deserted courtyard. Without exciting suspicion, I left the taproom, went around the house, found a ladder which was just long enough to enable me by standing on its top rung to reach the sill, and here I am. The rest was easy."

"What is to be done now?"

"We will not discuss our plans in the presence of

this gentleman, who can hear if he can neither see nor speak. If you will guard him a few moments, however, I will make such arrangements as may be necessary."

"Would you leave me alone with him?" I cried.

"He is helpless, absolutely helpless. He can move neither hand nor foot."

He stepped over to the baronet and drew from its scabbard the dress sword that he wore. This weapon he handed to me.

"Take your place before him," he directed, "and if he makes a sound or a movement, run him through. I shall be back in three minutes. Indeed, you must do it. Our safety depends upon securing him properly."

"Very well," I replied faintly, "I shall do my best, but hurry."

He was gone in an instant. I stood there trembling like a fool with the naked sword in my hand. Poor Sir Percy—I really pitied him—was as devoid of expression as an oyster, and scarcely capable of more motion. He did strain at his bonds, however, and in my fright I presented the sword at his breast, and must have given him a prick, for he at once subsided. I could not even mock the wretched man, although there was much that I might have said. At any rate, the time passed swiftly enough, and presently my sailor entered the room again. He bore in his hand a coil of stout rope, with which he proceeded to tie Sir Percy to the chair with a scientific precision which at other times would have excited my admiration. When he had passed such a lashing as no man, unless he were a juggler at a vil-

lage fair, could have extricated himself from, he turned to me.

"Now, madam," he said, "we will go."

"First, if you please," I said, "I should like to leave here the money we took from the coachman."

"Very well," returned the sailor, "three guineas will cover the whole amount. Have you that much left?"

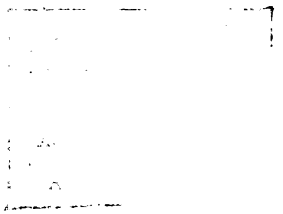
"More than that," I replied.

"I will place it on this table right by the baronet's hand. This is for your coachman," he cried in the latter's ear.

"Money that he was despoiled of by me," I interposed, at which the sailor laughed.

"I, too, have a little souvenir for Sir Percy," he said, speaking in a strange, constrained voice. Indeed he had spoken all the time in an unnatural way, the reason for which I did not quite divine, although now I think 'twas because he did not want even his voice to be recognized for some future meeting. He hauled out from his pocket a pawn ticket. "This," he said to the helpless prisoner, laying it down on the table and weighing it with one of the guineas, "is the ticket for a certain valuable diamond ring which I have this morning pawned on behalf of this lady for the sum of twenty guineas. You will do well to redeem the ring, Sir Percy. The value of it you are aware of, for 'twas your engagement ring. The engagement being broken in the summary manner of last night, by my advice Mistress Martindale has felt free to avail herself of what she no longer cared for. Now, I think, blindfolded, gagged and tied, you

Blindfolded, gagged and tied, you are safe until evening



are safe until the evening. My lady, will you descend to the inn parlor and tell the landlord that Sir Percy, having traveled all night, does not wish to be disturbed on any account? He will summon a servant when he needs anything, and they are to give themselves no concern about him. You can order a coach, if you will, and say that you will have to take the air before you eat your dinner."

"But what will you do?" I asked.

"I shall go down the way I came, first locking the door on the inside and taking the key with me. I will meet you at the door."

"You promise me on your word of honor that you will do the man no hurt," I said, suspicious of this purpose.

"No more than I have done already," returned the sailor laughing grimly, "and now as 'tis after the time and we are late, I must ask you to hurry."

"But these packages."

"Leave them to me."

There was still a length of rope, and in a short time he had bound them securely together in one large package, although I fear somewhat to the detriment of the dainty articles contained therein.

"Now, madam, time presses."

He opened the door slightly, standing between the hall and Sir Percy, lest any should observe the situation.

"Sir Percy," said I, "the next time you abduct a lady, make sure that she is alone in the carriage."

With that I stepped into the hall, and the door was closed behind me. I descended the stairs, delivered my message, was met by my sailor at the door of the inn, a carriage was soon forthcoming, he mounted to the box with the driver, I was ensconced inside with my bundles, and away we went.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IN WHICH I TAKE SHIP FOR THE VIRGINIAS

WE drove rapidly along the streets until we came to some sort of public promenade or garden. At the entrance to this my sailor stopped the coach, paid the driver his fare, dismissed him and led me into the garden. There were benches under the trees, and at his direction I sat down on one of them, and we waited, he standing respectfully before me for all the world like the lackey he was not, until the coachman had driven out of sight.

I was so overcome and agitated that I knew not what to say. I stared in silence before me, submissive in the hands of fate and of this man, waiting what further was to befall me. Indeed, so rapid had been the changes through which I had passed, the alterations of anxiety, fear, despair and hope, that I was scarce mistress of myself. Although I am not a woman of the weeping sort, I could have cried abundantly, and tears would have been, as they have ever proved to my sex, a refuge. But I simply would not cry with the cold, somewhat quizzical glance of the man before me fixed upon my face. I bit my lip and controlled myself as best I might, waiting for further leadership. Presently he spoke.

"Now, madam, we must make the best of our way to

the shore. Fortunately it is but a little space from here. We are already much behind our time, and ship captains do not like to wait for "—he paused—" common sailors."

"I am ready to go now," replied I, rising, "and I am thankful that I am able to go. My sensations," I continued as we passed down the walk, which as it was somewhat after the noon hour was more or less deserted, "when I opened that door and saw that hateful man can scarcely be imagined."

"He has come out of the affair badly enough," laughed my companion who was walking by my side quite unlike a coachman, and it is proof of my perturbation that I had completely forgotten that he was still in livery.

"Suppose he escapes," I interrupted.

"It isn't supposable," answered my sailor composedly, "no man could extricate himself unaided from such a lashing as I passed about him, and if the landlord respects your directions, we shall have the rest of the day in which to make good our escape. Indeed, Sir Percy bound, gagged and blindfolded as he is, will have no means of summoning assistance, and I should not be surprised if he were left undisturbed until to-morrow."

"Unless," I said, "the fact that I do not return awakens suspicion and causes investigation to be made."

"We must count on that, of course, but at any rate I am sure that we will have six good hours before us. With this breeze blowing it may be enough."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It will not take Sir Percy long," was the answer, "to find out that we have taken ship and what ship, and it will take him less time to put the *Porcupine*, which I have heard in the gossip of the port is quite ready for sailing, on our course."

"Will she overtake us?"

"That's in the hands of the gods. I can't say."

"Is the ship to which you are taking me a fast one?"

"Speedy for a merchantman, 'tis said."

"And the *Porcupine*?"

"Unfortunately she is reputed to be the fastest brig in the British navy. Most of them are tubs, it must be admitted," he went on contemptuously in a way which did not at all please me, "but in this one, by some unlucky chance for us, they stumbled on a fast model; probably it was French built. The French are the only people besides ourselves who can build speedy ships."

"Why should we build speedy ships?" I answered tartly, "since it is easy for us to take them from the French, and it will be, I have no doubt, easy for us to get them from the Americans."

"We shall see about that, madam. Meanwhile, it would have been much better if I had killed him then and there."

"But you could not have murdered a man in cold blood!" I exclaimed.

"Cold blood!" He flashed a look at me that sent the blood tingling almost to my heels. "Why, he was insulting you, he was gloating over you, he had assailed your honor. 'Fore God, madam, my blood was hot

enough then and 'tis hot enough now to have choked him to death without compunction."

I felt properly abashed. There was nothing I could say. So this was on my account. And yet I had fancied that there was some private animosity in my sailor's mind toward Sir Percy Reade. Well, time would show.

By this time we had arrived on the strand. There in front of us lay a ship's boat, manned by three sturdy-looking seamen with an under officer in the stern. At a signal from my companion, they ran the boat up on the sand as near the shore as they could come. Without a word of apology my sailor picked me up, waded out into the water, deposited me in the stern sheets by the side of the boat officer, went back for my baggage, which he tossed in the bows, scrambled aboard himself and took the stroke oar. The boat was shoved off, turned about, and in a minute we were headed toward a tall ship which swung to a short cable some distance down the harbor. There were men aloft on her yards, and most of her sails hung loose in the buntlines. The boat swept around the stern of the ship, whereon I read in big gold letters the words, "*Potomac of Washington,*" and made fast to the starboard gangway.

"Will you have a whip from the main yard, madam?" asked the officer of the boat, while the men tossed their oars and laid them on board.

"A whip?" asked I, uncomprehending and somewhat alarmed.

"I meant a block and tackle and a bo's'n's chair to swing you on board."

"Certainly not," I replied, "I can scramble up this ladder if—if—Mr. Brown will help me."

Why I added that "Mr." I don't know, but the fact remains that I did.

"Brown," said the officer grinning, "help this young lady up the battens."

"Aye, aye, sir," returned my sailor, touching his cap for all the world like an ordinary seaman.

As he spoke he rose in the boat, gave me his hand and then, as I put my foot on the battens leading to the gangway, he followed me and kept me from that dizzy, uncertain feeling which I always have when there is nothing beneath me. Some of the sailors passed my bundle up to him, and in a moment we stepped through the gangway and on to the disorderly deck of a large ship. Brown indicated that I should go aft where a stout, burly weather-beaten officer, clad in a short pea jacket, although the day was warm and pleasant, stood on a horse-block overlooking the crew, which was bustling to and fro busy with ropes around masts and sides and apparently getting the ship under sail, stimulated thereto by the vigorous language, shocking enough to me, of two men whom I took to be the mates.

Followed by my sailor, I picked my way aft and stopped before the stout man. Brown touched his cap.

"Well, what is it?" cried the stout man sharply.

"Captain Harks, this is the young lady to whom you were kind enough to offer passage to Virginia."

"Hum!" growled the captain. "What did you say the young lady's name was, my man?"

"Miss Caroline Martindale, sir. She is a cousin of Major Thomas Martindale, of Eastcourt, on the James River below Williamsburg."

"Aye, aye, Miss, I know the name," said the captain, sticking out a horny, tarry hand which I at once grasped, whereat he shook my hand with astonishing vigor. "We're not fitted for feemales aboard this ship, but seein' as how you're recommended by "—he stopped, stumbled, hesitated—"seein' as how you're in trouble and are kin to Major Martindale, I made an exception in your case and took ye aboard. We got a queer crew of passengers this trip, ma'am. There's yourself, a feemale, and then there's the Rev. Thomas Tooker. He shares the cabin with you."

"Shares the cabin with me!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, we all do, but you got your own private berth, you know."

"Your stateroom, that is," murmured Brown in my ear.

"Oh," I said, "thank you very much. This Dr. Tooker is of what persuasion?"

"'Piscopal Church, ma'am. Good ol' Virginia stock. I'm 'Piscopal myself if I'm anything."

"I shall be glad of his society," I remarked.

"Jes' so, ma'am. Now, as I'm right busy gettin' our mud-hook off the bottom and the ship under way, p'raps you'll excuse me."

"I think the lady might like to go to her cabin, Captain Harks, sir," interposed my sailor submissively.

Indeed, his manner was exactly that of any other

sailor, and it galled me. I fairly hated him, standing there so submissive before that rough, common, if good-hearted, merchant skipper.

"Jes' so, jes' so," returned Captain Harks. "My man"—disgusting, patronizing familiarity, I thought —"you jes' take the lady down the companionway yonder and show her her stateroom. It's the for'ard one on the port side, which is the largest, airiest and comfortablest, I take it. Ma'am, dinner will be ready in the cabin at one bell. For the rest, the ship and all in it is your'n."

"This way, ma'am," said my sailor, turning aft.

And as I followed him, I heard Captain Harks muttering under his breath:

"Preachers and wimmen! Good Lord, what is Sammy Harks comin' to in his ol' age?"

The cabin was a good-sized one. I learned afterwards that the *Potomac* was a ship of eight hundred tons, which was large indeed for a merchantman, and her builders had not stinted her officers. The captain's cabin, which was aft, ran the whole width of the ship. There were six other cabins, or staterooms, on either side of the large cabin in which we found ourselves. The two mates each had one, the Rev. Dr. Tooker another, I the fourth, and the other two were unoccupied.

There was a man in the cabin. He rose to his feet as we descended the stairs, and turning, came toward me. He was a kind old man, with long white hair, and of venerable aspect.

"Is this Miss Martindale?" he began.

"It is, sir," I answered.

"My child," he said, taking my hand in his, "I am very glad indeed to see you. Young Brown here"—he nodded toward my sailor, who kept respectfully in the background—"has told us something of your story. I have been over in England for some investigations at Cambridge University, ecclesiastical matters which would not interest you, my child, and I am returning to my parish earlier than I thought on account of the threatened outbreak of hostilities, which may God avert! I am glad indeed that Providence permitted me to be on the same ship with you. I can perhaps make it pleasanter for you than if you were alone."

"Indeed, sir," I cried, "I am more than pleased that you are here. I have gone through such misery and sorrow and trouble since my father's death; I have experienced so much ingratitude and disdain and contumely and treachery from men, such heartless indifference from women, that I scarce know where to turn."

"When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord will take thee up," said the old man softly, still patting my hand, "and though men fail and women desert you, you will always have One to whom you may turn in confident assurance."

"Yes," I replied, "and God did raise up to me in my time of need one friend whom, however humble his condition, I can never forget."

I turned to my sailor, and impulsively extended my hand to him. He seized it in his own, bowed his head over it, and kissed it like a gentleman.

As I stared at him in some astonishment, Dr. Tooker led me to the door of my cabin.

"You will be tired," he said. "Our noon meal will be served here presently, and then, after you have broken your fast, you can take a long rest this afternoon. You are in safe hands now, and I trust have seen the end of your troubles."

Priest the poor old man was, but no prophet, for in spite of his reassuring words, which found an echo in my heart, my real troubles, as I learned later, were just beginning.

I turned into my cabin—the stateroom was a commodious one—threw myself down on my berth, and burst into a flood of tears. Oh what relief I found therein! I could have cried—I had not believed it possible before—for hours, but I realized that grief was a luxury in which I could not then indulge, so I presently rose, bathed my face, and when Dr. Tooker tapped on my door and announced that dinner was ready, I went out and did my part as the daughter of a soldier.

Captain Harks and his mate, Zedekiah Jackson, dined with Dr. Tooker and myself. The captain proposed getting under way immediately after dinner, consequently the meal was a hurried one. Immediately after the doctor had said grace, which the two sailors listened to respectfully enough but with evident impatience, I remarked innocently:

"Why, where is Mr. Brown?"

"As a able seaman aboard this bark, or, as it might

be, a bo's'n's mate, he has already et with the men for'ard," remarked Captain Harks suavely. "Men of his class don't generally mess in the cabin with the officers. In short, Miss, you'll larn before the cruise is out that we spells Rank with a big R on this here craft."

The captain, as he spoke, thumped his breast with his huge fist as though he were the "R" himself.

"I see," I answered submissively.

"William Brown," said Dr. Tooker, "is a very worthy young man, you understand, but of course, so long as he fills a seaman's berth, he must put up with a seaman's fare, and——"

"Ablest seaman on the ship," sputtered the mate through his soup.

My heart sank at these words. Somehow, in spite of all that had been said, I had believed the man to be a gentleman, at least he had acted like one with me.

Declining Dr. Tooker's suggestion that I might want to rest in my cabin, after securing the captain's permission, I went on deck and stood watching while the ship was got under way. Mr. Jackson had said that my sailor was the smartest on the ship. I own it gave me a feeling of anxiety to see him recklessly running aloft and standing on the extreme edge of the topsail yard to overhaul a bit of gear that had got foul, but he seemed to mind it no more than he did killing villains or succoring unfortunate damsels in distress. What was most provoking was that although I was in full view on the flush deck of the ship, standing well up to wind-

ward, which was the side on which he had ascended the main topmast, he did not cast a glance in my direction. I did not choose to be disdained by any man, soldier, sailor, what you please, common or uncommon, and I determined that Mr. Brown should feel his remissness before that cruise was ended.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN WHICH I RECEIVE LESSONS IN SEA ETIQUETTE

ALTHOUGH the crew was a small one for such a large ship—the *Potomac* did not differ from other merchantmen in that particular—yet the men worked with what to me was surprising speed. Their exertions were stimulated by the coarse and rude exhortations of Mr. Jackson and the second mate, whose name was Eccles. The captain, too, now and again put in a sharp peremptory word which, possibly on account of its infrequency, was more efficacious than the continued vociferation of the other two. I learned afterwards that the whole quarterdeck was more subdued than usual on account of my presence. I am thankful that I had that ameliorating effect on the conditions, and I wonder with horror what they would have been if I had not been there.

Brown seemed to have some sort of petty officer's place. The direction of a great many things appeared to be committed to him. I observed that he worked as silently as he fought, and that wherever he was engaged, order presently appeared out of confusion. Indeed to my untutored eye, the whole work seemed to

be centered about him, but perhaps that was because—Nonsense, what was I thinking of?

At any rate the three topsails were soon sheeted home, the capstan was manned, and amid cheery songs and shouts and much trampling, the anchor was broke from the bottom. The ship's head was cast to starboard; jibs were hoisted; the spanker hauled out; the courses got on her; the light sails sheeted home, and away we went.

It was beautiful. I had sailed to France, and of course as a child from India; but since I had grown to womanhood I had never actually seen a ship gotten under way, and the swiftness and grace of it all pleased me immensely. Then the gear which had lain on the deck in what to me appeared to be inextricable confusion was coiled up and hung upon the pins; the watch was set; Mr. Jackson took the deck, although, as the harbor was crowded with shipping, the captain still remained aft ready for any emergency. The first thing Mr. Jackson did after he mounted the horse-block was to call for two smart hands to take the wheel.

"You, Brown," he bellowed, "get one other man and lay aft. 'Tis nice steerage, mum," he said to me—I had edged up to windward close by, where he stood on his elevated little platform—"and I want the best hands in the ship at the hellum."

"And is Mr. Brown——?"

"Ma'am," interposed the captain who was standing near, "at book larnin' I'll 'low that you know a heap more'n anybody aboard the ship 'cept Dr. Tooker, it

may be. P'raps you know more'n all of us put together, although you can't work out a sight or navigate a wessel as some I might mention can."

I bowed to the compliment, but said nothing, wondering whither all this might tend.

"But there's a thing or two we sailor men can teach you," the old skipper ran on.

"I haven't a doubt of it, captain," replied I, turning my eyes full upon him with the usual effect.

The old sailor blinked at me for a few moments.

"And what are the things you can—and will—teach me?" I continued while he stared. "I'm most anxious to learn anything about everything, and if you'll only teach me, I'll be the most grateful girl indeed."

"Lord love you, miss," said the captain ruffling under the flattery in my words and manner, "anything, any larnin' that I've got is at your service. I was jest a-goin' to give you a few idees on the subject as we was talkin' of in the cabin. That's rank. There's only three misters aboard this ship, or, rather, there's only two. I ain't mister. I'm the master of the ship, properly called in conversation 'cap'n.' Jackson there, he's mister. The second mate, well they gen'rally calls him mister, too, to distinguish him from the men, though second mates don't amount to much as a rule. He's lately come from the foc's'l, as anybody can see, him not havin' the refinement and manners like Mr. Jackson and—well, you understan'?"

"Quite so," I answered, much mystified by this harangue, which the captain delivered with much unction.

"The p'int is, miss, that we don't call no man for'ard of the mainmast—which is a way of alludin' to the crew, the able and ordinary seamen, the petty officers, and so on—we don't call them mister. Their name's Brown, or Jones, or Bill, or Jack, as the case may be. Now, I heerd you askin' Mr. Jackson there if Mr. Brown was somethin' or other, and I want to warn you now that, as I said, there ain't no misters in the crew of this ship. If you have occasion to speak of 'em or to 'em, it's by their name, or my lad, or my man, or— Mind your steerin' there, ye lubber!" he turned and roared fiercely at Brown. "You come within a fathom of that there coaster."

"Aye, aye, sir," immediately returned my sailor coolly, never turning a hair or changing countenance.

Now, I could see myself, inexperienced as I was, that it had been a choice between the coaster and another vessel on the other side, and that Brown had shot the big *Potomac* through the opening with a skill and precision I did not believe possible to attain in the handling of so large a ship. The captain saw it, too, but I rather fancy that the whole scene was enacted for my benefit. I wondered why my sailor took it so submissively. I wondered why he didn't point out to the captain that it had been necessary for him to pass close to the coaster to keep from running into the brig. Since he did not do so—and I confess I felt some contempt toward him for his submission—I thought I would try it myself.

"But, captain, you shouldn't rate Mr.—I mean my

lad," I went on in confusion which was worse because of the double stumble I had made, "Brown I should say," I continued savagely, "because there was danger of running down that other ship yonder."

I could see Brown bite his lip, as I said this in the most innocent way looking up at the captain.

The master of the ship fairly turned purple. He opened his mouth, sputtered, choked, lifted his hand, clenched his fist, smote his other fist with it and strove for utterance. Finally, he got it out:

"Well, I'll be—savin' your presence, if ever I heerd anything like that. Come aft here, miss, where we can be private. I want to talk a little more with you about ship's manners and ship's etiket. I ain't never experienced nothin' like this in my forty years of seafarin'."

I turned and followed him aft submissively enough, but much amused by the situation nevertheless.

"Why," asked the captain, when he got me in a retired spot by the weather spanker vang, "ain't you a soldier's daughter?"

"I was," I answered, biting my lips, my eyes filling with tears at the thought of my father.

"There, there," said the captain, laying a fatherly hand on my shoulder as he saw my agitation, "never mind. I got daughters of my own at home. I feel for you. I know you didn't understan'. But don't you know that you mustn't never interfere 'twixt a officer an' his men? What'd your father 've said if you'd 'a' done that?"

"He would have been very angry indeed, I am sure," I returned contritely.

"Well, I ain't quick in the temper—oh, no. There's no man lives, and only one woman, my wife, can say Sammy Harks is quick in the temper, but if I ever did come nigh gettin' reel mad and breakin' clear away from my moorin's, it was that minute."

"Well, but you see, captain, I thought you were wrong and unjust to the poor man, and I knew that a noble nature like yours would be only too glad to have attention called to an error so you could make amends."

"Ma'am," said the captain, laying the forefinger of one hand upon the forefinger of the other to emphasize his remark and looking at me very seriously, "there's two or three things that you got to larn as the fust principles of life on shipboard. One of 'em is, the captain of the ship ain't never wrong. He's allus right. No matter what happens, no matter what seems, no matter what is, it's the cap'n that's allus right and a sailor, he's allus wrong. That's the first p'int."

"Are you always right, captain?"

"In course I am—on ship, that is. When I'm home, it's different. There the missus is allus right. She becomes the cap'n in that case. But that's neither here nor there. And the second p'int is that if the cap'n ever was wrong—he never is—but if he was for the sake of argument, it'd undermine all discipline for him to admit it. The sailors has got to think he's right whether it's so or not. The third thing is that nobody ever talks back to the cap'n—on the ship, that is. Outside I ain't

sayin' but that wimmen have faculties of talkin' back, but here I'm the talker, and the rest of 'em has got to take it. And the fourth thing you've got to larn is that nothin' ever happens that the cap'n don't see. Now I seen that brig, and I knowed—for another thing to larn incidental is that the cap'n knows everything—and I knowed that this old hooker was bein' well steered to clear her. There ain't nobody on this ship can handle a wheel better'n Brown onless it's me. 'Twa'n't his steerin' that I was findin' fault with. 'Twas his deeportment."

"What was the matter with his deportment?"

"That's another thing you got to learn, miss."

"Mercy, captain!" I exclaimed, "what a lot of things to remember! My poor brain whirls."

"It's too bad, but it's got to be, miss, and this last's as important as t'others. No cap'n is ever to be axed any question; that is, by the ship's comp'ny. In your case I make an exception, bein' as you're young and a woman, and don't know no better. And I'll 'low you to ax me any questions you want to ax, only not before the ship's comp'ny. That'd be the underminin' of the ship's discipline. But I'll tell you about that Brown: he's a bit above his station in some ways, and he's got to be took down a little. Not that he's unruly, or mutinous, or anything like that. If he was that, I'd have him flogged at once. There's nothin' like a taste of the cat-o'-nine-tails to take out of a man the feelin' that he's too good for his place or anything of that kind."

"You wouldn't flog Brown?" I asked apprehensively, looking up at the old man.

"Ma'am," returned the captain impressively, "I'd flog anybody on the ship, Dr. Tooker even, if 'twas necessary."

"Except me. You wouldn't flog me, captain?" I suggested, with a suspicion of tears in my voice.

"Well," said the captain, condescendingly flourishing his hat, "I doubt if it'd be necessary in your case. I think you'd be amenable to a few friendly words of advice like them I'm givin' you now."

"Thank you, captain," I replied, bowing and smiling, apparently greatly relieved, "I don't think you need fear anything from me."

"But I was sayin'," continued the old man, sticking to the point, "Brown's deeportment was not what it oughter 've been."

"Will you be very angry at me, captain"—I smiled up at him in my most bewitching way—"if I ask you what he was doing?"

"He was lookin' at me, and 'tain't proper for a seaman to look at his cap'n 'ceptin' when he's bein' addressed by his superior officer. He's to keep his eyes on his business, and although Brown was a-steerin' his ship all right—I seen that, anybody could 've seed that—he was lookin' at me with one eye all the time."

"But perhaps he was looking at me?" I hazarded.

"No matter of difference between us. I represent not only authority on this ship, but I represent the passen-

gers also, and none of the hands has got any more right to look at you any more'n they've got a right to look at me unless I give 'em permission."

"I'm afraid, captain," I returned—I really could not help it, the old man was so pompous and sententious, and so filled with ideas as to the exalted nature of his rank, that I could not resist the temptation—"I am afraid you'll have a hard time keeping the men from looking at me."

The captain fairly gasped.

"You see," I ran on artlessly, "most men have found me good to look at, and I am accustomed to being looked at. For myself, I don't want the men not to look at me, if they want to—if it gives them any pleasure, that is. Poor things!"

"Well, I'll be—" began the captain. Then he choked up again. Then the humor of the situation got hold of him, and he laughed. "I've allus said, Miss Martindale," he remarked when he could control himself, "that I'd rather be master of a shipload of men than have to tackle one feemale woman. I guess you're right," he continued, staring at me. "You're pretty good to look at. I don't know as I'd blame the men for castin' a squint aft on occasion. But, by the Lord!" he roared, smiting his fist into his hand again—it was a favorite gesture of Captain Harks, I afterwards learned—"they sha'n't do it on the quarterdeck. The man at the wheel's got to fix his eyes on the compass, or he'll hear from me."

"I'm very much obliged to you for your lesson in

sea manners and in sea discipline," said I, "and I'm sure I shall try my best to be an apt pupil."

"Oh, you'll larn soon enough," said the captain encouragingly. And we turned and walked forward.

By this time we had got clear of most of the ships in the harbor, and a fair way lay before us. Mr. Jackson was entirely competent to take the deck, and the captain, after seeing all clear, turned and went below. It was my opportunity. I turned toward the midship-line and walked to the wheel. The other sailor had gone forward, and Brown was temporarily alone there.

He looked straight ahead of him as I approached, and gave no outward evidence that he knew I was near him.

"My lad," I began, taking a leaf out of the captain's book, "you were reproved a moment since by your captain for——"

There was a violent cough behind me. I turned to see Mr. Jackson's grim face staring at me from the vantage ground of the horse-block with a very forbidding look.

"You seem to have a bad cold, Mr. Jackson. Maybe I can fix up something for you. My father used to say that I was a good doctor, and——"

Mr. Jackson also turned purple. It was wonderful the shortness of breath which seemed to be prevalent on that ship.

"'Tain't that, ma'am," he growled. "I coughed purposelike."

"Indeed," I remarked much mystified, "is anything the matter with you?"

"No'm, not with me. Leastways— Brown, what the blank are you starin' at? Mind your steerage, man. Great——"

But I cannot repeat the remarks of the mate. I turned and fled incontinently, wondering in what way I had offended again. As before, Brown simply said, "Aye, aye, sir," and paid no attention. I had always imagined a sailor as a man full of spirit and daring, and to see the man that I owed so much to, who had been so dominant and masterful a few hours before, taking these things so tamely, filled me with increased disgust. Besides, what had been the cause of it? I could have sworn that he had not glanced at me as I approached. Well, I was not going to submit to the mystery any longer, so I marched forward to where Mr. Jackson stood meditatively leaning on the iron rail around the horse-block, his trumpet dangling from his wrist.

"Mr. Jackson," I began determinedly, "what was the matter with you a moment ago?"

"Ma'am," said Mr. Jackson, carefully extricating his quid before he spoke and depositing it overboard, "can't a man speak to a sailor in his own watch without bein' called in question for it?"

"It isn't that," I replied, raising my voice so that it was quite audible to the man at the wheel. "So far as I am concerned, I don't care how you speak to the common sailors on the ship, but there was something in my conduct which——"

"'Tain't allowed for passengers to speak to the man at the wheel," said Mr. Jackson shortly.

"Oh," said I, "I didn't understand that. I am sure I didn't have any special wish to speak to him. I only wanted to know how the ship was steered and——"

"I'll be pleased to show you anything you want to know, and all the other officers 'll do the same, but no talkin' is allowed, as a rule, 'tween the fo'c's'l and the quarterdeck, and you better keep the rules of the ship."

"Fo'c's'l and quarterdeck?" I asked innocently, although I knew very well the distinction implied in those terms. "Are you fo'c's'l or quarterdeck, Mr. Jackson?"

"Quarterdeck!" he answered, with suppressed amazement and indignation. "Don't you see I'm next in rank aboard this ship to Cap'n Harks?" he growled.

"Am I fo'c's'l or quarterdeck?"

"Quarterdeck, in course," continued the mate obtusely, "although if you hobnobs with the man at the wheel, there'll be some doubts about it."

"Oh, no," said I sweetly. "You don't really think so, Mr. Jackson, I am sure, for you know that wherever I stand is the quarterdeck, isn't it?"

"Well, I'll be ——" exclaimed the mate, and then stopped.

Those men were always going to be something or other, but what it was I never quite found out. They always stopped just in time. I shot a glance toward my sailor. His eyes, it seemed to me, were twinkling with humor, yet he was biting his lip. Aside from that his face was as immobile as the binnacle before him. Really life was not going to be without all opportunities for

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amusement on this ship among these various men. I had had a tilt with the captain and the mate, and was wondering with whom I could run the next course when Dr. Tooker appeared on deck. He was smiling, and seemed to be in a very good humor. He came straight to me and began:

"I should like to have a word with you, Miss Martindale."

"A dozen, if you like, doctor," quoth I. "I have just had words with the captain and with Mr. Jackson, and I tried to have a few with my lad, yonder, but unsuccessfully."

Dr. Tooker smiled broadly.

"My dear, all the world bows to youth and beauty, especially if it wear a frock. What is insolence and impudence in a mere male person like myself is only charming in a female. Our worthy captain is in a parlous state of mind."

"So is our worthy mate." Then I raised my voice on purpose so that it would carry to where Mr. Jackson stood. "I think he is going to have consumption. He has a parlous cough."

"No, no, miss," growled Mr. Jackson remonstratively, "as I told you, I ain't got no manner of cough."

"I'm going to make him a mixture," I continued sweetly, "if there's anything in the cabin to work with when I go below."

The mate clenched his hands violently at this dire possibility, but he said nothing, at least nothing that

I could hear, although he was apparently muttering something under his breath, and from his looks it was something bad.

"Exactly," said Dr. Tooker, smiling, "but discipline is discipline, and as the captain justly puts it, he can brook no interference or allow no remonstrance or question or anything of that sort from anyone. And while you are here, you must obey the rules of the ship."

"Of course I shall," I returned contritely. "I really meant no harm. I should not have interfered between the captain and the sailor yonder. I did not realize or understand. I shall not offend again. And as for Mr. Jackson, I didn't know it was against the rules to speak to anybody on the ship. Nobody has ever prevented me from speaking to anybody that I wanted to speak to heretofore, and I thought of course——"

"Yes, my child, but ships are different. They are little worlds, you see. The captain of the ship is everything but God. Like the king, he can do no wrong. His acts are not questionable. Remonstrances cannot be made to him. His is the entire responsibility, and his must be the power unlimited."

"Very good," said I. "You will find that I am the most submissive of women before the cruise is out."

Dr. Tooker laughed.

"Unless you can be more submissive than that, I am afraid it will not answer," he said cheerfully.

"Well, at least, it won't be for want of trying," I replied. And then I asked a question. "But am I never

to be permitted to speak to anybody except the captain and the two mates and you?"

"My child," asked the amused old doctor, "aren't four men enough for one young woman?"

"Sometimes one man is enough for one woman, doctor," I returned, "but in this case, no, for Captain Harks is married and has daughters of his own, and you——"

"I, too, am married."

"And I suppose the two mates are also."

"And are you seeking marriage, my child?"

"God forbid!" I burst out impulsively. "I have but just escaped being married to a scoundrel."

"You see," said the old doctor gently, "there's some compensation in your father's death, or think how unhappy might have been your fate."

"Yes," said I. "I suppose there's compensation somewhere for everything, but it's main hard to see it at the time."

"It is indeed."

"To return to my question," I continued, not to be diverted, "am I not to be permitted to speak to any of the others?"

"With whom do you wish to speak?"

"With Brown," I said boldly. "And I ought to speak to him," I continued, "if you could know with what courage, what devotion, what skill and energy he succored me. Why, sir, had it not been for him, at this hour I would have been dead if I could compass it, or alive in shame. I owe him much, and although he be a—

common sailor as the phrase goes, there is that between us in the way of benefits conferred and obligations incurred that bridges over difference in rank."

Dr. Tooker looked thoughtful.

"All that you say is true, and does you honor. I know this young Brown; I know his family in Virginia."

"His family! Tell me," I cried, "is it a good family, are they people of——"

"My dear," said the doctor adroitly, "it is just such a family as might be expected to produce just such a man as young Brown"—which really told me nothing at all—"but here on the ship, I am afraid, unless some very unusual circumstances arise, that the intercourse between you must be restricted to a 'Good morning' or a 'Good night' nod or word if chance throws you together. You see while this deck is a flush deck and extends unbroken, that is, from the fo'c's'l yonder to the rail here, yet it is divided into two parts by a line which, while it is imaginary to you, is visible and palpable enough to everybody else. That line runs right forward of the mainmast. The crew are there and the officers here, and your lot is here and here you must remain."

There was wisdom, of course, in what the doctor said. It was very hard, though, that I could not say a word to the man who had done so much for me and who had shown himself so high and noble in spirit and purpose. Really the cruise would not be so pleasant, after all. One would get tired of the humors of the captain, and

while the old clergyman was doubtless a saint—he looked like it and spoke like it, and I am sure he would have acted like it on occasion—yet he was not altogether the companion a young woman like myself would have desired. I really would have preferred Brown to all of them.

We were well out of the harbor now and racing through the water at a great pace under the influence of the breeze which had freshened materially, I judged, since morning. It was late in the afternoon. I did not realize how tired I was until I had been reduced to a proper degree of submission and harmony with the customs of a ship. I made up my mind that I would go below and rest.

Therefore I made my adieus to Dr. Tooker, walked deliberately forward to the mainmast just in front of the imaginary line. I surveyed the ship and the surrounding sea for a few moments, and then turned and walked aft to the companionway which led below to the cabin. I had to pass quite close by the wheel. Something, some foolish impulse doubtless, made me hesitate as I came abreast the helmsman. I turned my face slightly toward him—fortunately Mr. Jackson was squinting up to windward—and I smiled at him. A flicker of a smile was the response on the face of my sailor, and then the incident was over.

I descended to my cabin, removed my outer garments, threw myself in my berth, and after a few moments of dreaming, fell fast asleep. I remember that just before I lost myself in the land of dreams I made

up my mind that, willy-nilly, I should have some words with Master Brown before the voyage ended. I would pit my woman's wit and my woman's wiles against the captain and his men, and had no doubt of my ability to bring it about. If they had let me alone, I probably might never have wanted to speak to him at all except in the most casual way under the impulses of common courtesy, but having made it a forbidden thing, I was as hungry for it as Eve was for the apple.

CHAPTER NINE

IN WHICH AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN IS MADE

IT was late in the afternoon when I awoke. My stateroom was on the windward side of the ship, and the level rays of the setting sun streaming through the glass deadlight, which was my only illumination, made a brilliant spot of light on the inner bulkhead. As I lay stupidly staring about the room, I heard through the thin deal door some conversation in the main cabin. I recognized Mr. Jackson's voice. He was speaking rapidly for him, and evidently laboring under great excitement.

"I tell you it's serious, Dr. Tooker. I shouldn't wonder if the man was done for. The cap'n has sent me for his medicine chest. Fortunately he was on deck at the time."

"God bless me!" cried Dr. Tooker, evidently very much agitated, "I'll go on deck at once."

"Do, sir," said Mr. Jackson, "there may be need of your services."

"He fell from the mainyard, you say?"

"From the futtock shrouds of the mainmast, sir, and——"

I heard no more. Indeed I had jumped to my feet at the first word, and began putting on my outer garments with such haste and nervousness as I had never experienced. There had been some accident evidently, and I instantly jumped to the conclusion that it was Brown. He was a most reckless man. I had seen him actually standing up on the yardarm a few hours before, and he had possibly missed his footing and fallen. He might be dead! I had been accustomed, like other women, to dawdle at my toilet, but I don't believe any woman on earth or sea ever got dressed quicker than I did then. I didn't take any time except for the requirements of decency, and the mate had scarcely gained the deck with the captain's medicine chest before I was on his heels.

There was a little group on the quarterdeck just abaft the mainmast. I observed that the wind had freshened a good deal. The royals had been taken off the ship, and she was pitching rather heavily. But I managed to keep my footing—I was a natural sailor—and ran forward until I approached the huddle of men bent over a prostrate figure. For a moment I could not see who was lying on the deck. I was in such a state of excitement and agitation by this time that I seized the nearest man by the shoulder, pulled him aside and knelt down by the fallen man. One glance in his face set my heart going once more. It was not my sailor. It was the second mate, Mr. Eccles.

He was unconscious, as white as a summer cloud, and moaning faintly. Dr. Tooker was kneeling by his

side opposite me. The captain was bending over him, and the men of the watch had crowded aft and stood staring.

"This is no place for a feemale, ma'am," growled Captain Harks.

"Your pardon, captain, but I think it is," I replied. "The man is dreadfully hurt. I have some skill in nursing."

I slipped down beside the man and took his head in my lap. I handed my kerchief to the nearest man, and bade him wet it at the scuttle butt and bring it to me. And then I bathed the face of the poor sailor, while the captain hastily poured out some sort of restorative from the bottles in his sea medicine chest. Mingled with strong spirits, we forced a little of this down the lips of the poor man. He did not return to consciousness, however, and we watched him in great anxiety, helplessly gazing upon him until finally Dr. Tooker suggested that he had better be taken below to his cabin. Four of the sailors improvised a rude stretcher from some gratings, upon which as gently as possible they laid the senseless mate. They carried him below and placed him in his berth. Dr. Tooker and the captain undressed him and examined him critically. He had broken one leg and one arm, I learned, and had evidently been seriously injured internally.

It seems that a sail being reported during his own watch, he had gone aloft for a look at it. This was rather an unusual action for a mate, but every sail on the seas was an enemy, at least to an American ship, and

perhaps Mr. Eccles, who was new at the business, felt the responsibility of his position more than otherwise. After having satisfied himself by such inspection as he could give it from the maintopsail yard, he had started to descend to the deck. In climbing over the futtock shrouds which lead from the extreme edge of the maintop inboard to the mainmast, in some way he had missed his footing and had fallen to the deck below. He had struck an after swifter of the main shrouds, and had been pitched crookedly aft upon the deck on his back.

Dr. Tooker and the captain put his arm and leg in such splints as they could muster, and made him as comfortable as they could. There was little else that their skill could suggest to be done, and nothing more that mine could. I sat by him and bathed his face from time to time, but there was nothing that I could do, and the very helplessness of us all was the most terrible part of the tragic affair.

The door from the cabin into the stateroom was open, and the cabin boy was busy laying the table for supper. Dr. Tooker and the captain were in earnest conversation, presently broken off by the captain's voice.

"Joe," he said to the cabin boy, "jump up on deck and tell Mr. Jackson to put the ship in charge of Brown and step below a minute."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the youngster, making a sea scrape and flashing up the stairs as nimbly as a cat.

In a few moments Mr. Jackson's burly form appeared in the cabin.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, sir," returned the captain formally. "Poor Eccles there"—he nodded toward the cabin. "Take a look at him, Mr. Jackson. You've had good sea experience. What do you think of him?"

Mr. Jackson came over toward the door of the stateroom and stood balancing himself easily to the roll of the ship, looking down at the motionless form of his fellow officer.

"What is your opinion, Mr. Jackson?" I asked anxiously.

"He's a dead man, miss," was the solemn answer. "He must've got himself smashed up in'ardly somewhere. Poor fellow! He was a good sailor man. He'd been over them futtock shrouds on sim'lar occasions I'll venture to say a thousand times in his sea life, but we've all got to make a misstep some time. I'm main sorry for him."

"Is there nothing to be done?"

"Nothin', ma'am. We ain't surgeons enough or doctors enough to patch him up more'n we've done, and he's in God's hands, I reckon. For that matter, we all are all the time 'ceptin' when the devil gets a hold on us."

He shook his head and turned to the captain in the main cabin again. Through the open door I could hear and see everything that was said or done.

"Well," asked Captain Harks again, "what do you make of it?"

"Bad business, sir."

"What does it look like?"

"Death, sir," answered Mr. Jackson concisely, "or I ain't never seed his mark on a human critter's face afore."

"I think so too. I'm afraid you're right," said Dr. Tooker softly. "Poor fellow!"

"How did it happen, cap'n?" inquired the mate.

"God knows!" answered the captain. "He jest missed his footin' on the starboard main futtock shrouds and down he come. It was lucky that I was on deck to take immediate charge."

"I'm glad it didn't happen in my watch," said Mr. Jackson.

The captain nodded.

"What's to be done now?" he asked.

"I reckon you and me can sail the ship, sir, by standin' watch and watch," returned Mr. Jackson.

"I've a better plan than that," said the other. "You know you've got one spare hand in Brown, and I think I'll ask him aft to take the second mate's watch."

My heart jumped. So my sailor was coming into the cabin! That would be pleasant! But my eyes fell on the face of the dying man. I would not have had him come that way.

"Would he be willin' to come, cap'n?" broke out the mate.

"Willin'!" roared the captain. "There's only one will on this ship, and that's mine. He'll come if I say so, and——"

"Fair and softly, captain," thought I; "there's another will on the ship, and that's mine."

However, I said nothing, which was wise under the circumstances, of course.

"I think I can answer for it, Captain Harks," said Dr. Tooker, "that he can be persuaded to come."

"He's the best seaman on the ship," said the mate.

"Aye," said the captain, "and he can take a sight, too. He knows somethin' of navigation."

"Cut above his station, ain't he?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"Well, you'd never know it from him," returned Master Harks, "for a tidier, properer sailor there ain't on the sea. I've sailed with him afore, and I never had no trouble with him, never had no occasion to speak a word to him as far as that goes."

(Oh, captain, captain, had you forgotten your atrocious conduct of a few hours before!)

"I can answer," said Dr. Tooker, "for his quality and his capacity. It's true I'm no sailor, but I knew—" He stopped. His glance fell on me. I confess I was listening with all my ears. "I know a true man when I see one," said the doctor. "You heard what he did for the young lady yonder, and I think you'll make no mistake, Captain Harks, in admitting him to the cabin."

"Will it be agreeable to the young lady, I wonder?" asked the captain.

This was most unusual, for captains of ships are not in the habit of questioning their female passengers, I know, as to any actions they are going to take. But

Master Harks had not looked into my blue eyes in vain, it appeared. It was evident that I had got on the soft side of the old salt at any rate. As the question seemed to be directed to me, I stepped into the cabin myself and bowed to the triumvirate who were discussing affairs, and remarked:

"'Tis immaterial to me, of course. Whatever you think is necessary for the safety and welfare of the ship you will do. But I see no more objection to Brown than to any other sailor, and if he's capable—so far as my testimony goes, he certainly is brave and energetic—why, have him here by all means."

"'Nuff said!" roared the captain. "Mr. Jackson, will you go up on deck and send Brown below?"

"Aye, aye, sir," returned the mate, turning away.

In a moment my sailor entered the cabin. He saluted and stood quietly in an attitude of attention, not with his heels together and his little finger on the seams of his trousers as a soldier would have done, but balancing himself, as everybody must needs have done who stood on shipboard at that hour, to the motion of the wave-tossed ship.

"Brown," began the captain, folding his arms and looking at him austerely, "you're aware of the unfortunate accident which is like to cost Mr. Eccles his life?"

"I am, sir."

"Were you on deck when it happened?"

"No, sir. It was my watch below."

"Well, he lays yonder."

The captain pointed toward the berth. Brown's glance followed the captain's motion. Our eyes met. I do not believe he saw Mr. Eccles at all.

"And me, an' the mate, an' Dr. Tooker," the captain continued, "thinks that he's about ready to slip his cable for good and all. The ship's overmanned by one. You're a sort of supernumery hand, as it were, and if you want the second mate's berth, I'll give it to you. What do you say?"

"I shall be very glad to be of any service to you, sir."

"There ain't no doubts as to your capacity, I suppose?"

"I believe not, sir," was the cool, quiet answer.

How well I knew that tone. How often I had heard that same confidence in voice and seen it in bearing.

"Very good, then," said the captain, "fetch your things aft, or so long as you're goin' to be an officer, call a couple of hands to do it for you. Take your pick of the spare berths sence Mr. Eccles is still occupyin' his berth, which it won't be for long, I takes it. Then have all hands called."

"Very good, sir," returned my sailor, touching his cap and turning away.

I busied myself with my poor, helpless charge for a few moments, my conscience rather smiting me that I had neglected him in attending to the rather interesting scene in the cabin.

Presently there was another interruption in the way of two seamen lugging a small sea chest down the com-

panionway, which they stowed in the berth opposite mine. A moment afterwards the hoarse cry:

"All hands on deck," rang through the ship, and came faintly down to the cabin in which I stood.

Captain Harks rose as he heard it, and turned to me.

"Miss Martindale," he said, "if you want to see how we turns a common hand into a officer an' gent, come along on deck with me."

"But I can't leave poor Mr. Eccles," I said, although I very much wanted to be there to witness that novel and interesting process.

"I'll relieve you, child," said Dr. Tooker, "and indeed the poor young man is a fitter subject for my prayers than your, or anyone's, feeble ministrations, I fear."

Greatly relieved—I do not think I am a heartless woman, but really there was nothing I could do for the poor man to whom I had never spoken a word and whom I had scarcely seen—I followed Captain Harks on deck. He never thought of allowing me to precede him. I suppose such a thing as giving precedence to the Queen of England would not have occurred to Captain Harks on his own ship.

It was quite late by this time, and the sun was hidden behind a low black cloudy bank that seemed to indicate a coming storm. The men were gathered in the gangways and in a huddle about the mainmast. Mr. Jackson occupied the horse-block. In the forefront of the crew stood my sailor. He was dressed virtually just as they were—he had discarded his livery as soon as he

had set foot on the ship—but heavens! what a difference between him and them! They were good men and true, I had not a doubt—indeed, I learned that they were—but beside them he looked as if he came from a royal house. I had not time to speculate much on the matter, however, for Captain Harks stepped forward toward the crew and began to speak. He was something of a sea lawyer, this doughty old seaman. He loved the sound of his own words.

"Men," he began, "as you know, there's been a sad accident. Mr. Eccles missed his footin' somehow or other in the main futtock shrouds yonder an' fell to the deck, as some of you may have seed."

"Aye, aye, sir," nodded one or two of the old salts from the attentive group of listeners.

"Well, he's broke one arm an' a leg, an' must've hurt hisself in his in'ards some way that neither Parson Tooker, nor me, nor the young lady yonder can figger out. An' when a man's hurt so bad that I can't tell what's the matter with him, I tell you he's in a bad way. I've had some experience in these matters, as had Parson Tooker an' the young lady. Mr. Jackson agrees with me that poor Mr. Eccles is about to slip his cable. Sech bein' the case an' we bein' full handed, I allus believe in havin' my ships full manned. A full crew and a well-fed one, says I, makes a short passage an' a merry un. Am I right, mates?"

"Right you are, cap'n!" roared the crew in unison.

This was the wine of applause to the skipper, and he went on:

"Under them circumstances, it seems proper that as master of this ship"—if he had been the whole government of the United States he could not have said it with more emphasis and dignity—"I thought to select one of your number to take the second mate's place. He'll come aft, live an' mess in the cab'n, take the second mate's watch, an' be obeyed and respected accordin'. You understan', men?"

"Aye, aye, sir," came the gusty roar from the interested seamen.

"The man I've selected, as you might 'a' guessed, is William Brown. Brown, my lad, step aft."

Brown solemnly advanced two or three paces in front of his companions and stood beside the captain.

"Mr. Brown," said the captain impressively, reaching out his hands, "I shakes you by the hand. You've now become a officer an' a gent. D'ye hear that, men?"

"Aye, aye, sir, we hears you."

"Mr. Brown," continued the captain, "within your proper limits, in your rightful sp'ere, you represent me. You're an officer of this ship duly an' legally so constituted. Any man who disobeys you, disobeys me. You hear that, men?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"An' God help him if it comes to me! Mr. Brown, as 'tis the second mate's watch, you'll finish it out yourself. Keep the ship as she is. If it comes on to blow harder, let me know. I'll relieve you at one bell for your supper."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Brown, saluting.

"Mr. Jackson," said the captain, "dismiss your watch and turn to the starboard watch on deck."

Mr. Jackson gave the necessary orders. The little troop around the mainmast dispersed. He and the captain both went below, leaving me alone on the quarter-deck near my sailor.

Mr. Brown solemnly mounted the horse-block, leaned against the iron rail, folded his arms and looked ahead. He had not noticed me yet. I walked boldly over to the horse-block and looked up at him.

"I presume," said I, "that there's no law or custom in the ship which prevents my talking to one of the officers."

"None, madam, that I know of, although different captains make different laws."

"At any rate," I returned, "according to the recent public declaration of your superior officer, you are now an officer and a gentleman."

"Pardon," he interrupted, sarcastically I thought, "I think the captain's word was 'gent.' Perhaps it is not so violent a transition from a common sailor to a gent as it would be to a gentleman."

"It may be so," I returned. "I have always believed that gentlemen were such by the grace of God."

"Exactly," was the answer, "while a gent is by the grace of the captain."

"Well, whatever you may be," I returned, "I am glad you are what you are."

"Thank you."

"I mean that I am glad you are now in the position of an officer; that you will live in the cabin, and that you will be treated like a human being," I explained angrily.

"The second mate of a merchant ship," he returned smoothly, "as you will find, is not much of an officer. He's not long enough out of the fo'c's'l to have become accustomed to the cabin. He doesn't count for very much. He keeps a watch, but half the time the captain is on deck during his watch because he doesn't trust him."

"But you understand a ship, surely?"

"It's the only feminine thing that I do understand," he returned quickly.

There was something in his manner that I did not quite like.

"My lad, you are right," I said loftily. "I can perceive but little difference between a common sailor and a second mate."

I would have given a good deal if I had had a lorgnette. I have observed that most men sustain a long up-and-down, comprehensive glance from such an instrument very ill indeed. Of course I was at a disadvantage in talking with this man, as I generally was, in being beneath him. The horse-block on which he stood was raised two or three feet above the deck where I stood, and I had to look up at him. It is hard to be disdainful and look upward. However, my glance was expressive enough, and I turned away with an air of deep scorn.

I had not gone two feet, however, before his voice checked me.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly.

"What is it now?" I asked, turning my head in his direction.

"Since I am an officer, although a very inconsequential one I admit, I may be able to give you one or two bits of information which will supplement the captain's lesson, and recall to your mind somewhat the things he said."

"What information is that, pray?"

"'Tis this, madam: Mates, even those of the second class, are not addressed as 'my lad' by passengers on the ship."

I was so indignant and so taken aback that I scarce knew what to say.

"I shall not address you on any terms or by any title whatsoever," I replied hotly, turning toward the brightly lighted cabin.

CHAPTER TEN

IN WHICH I PLEDGE A RING

THE cabin was a pleasant place after all, I thought, as I sat down on one of the cushioned transoms to wait for supper. The table had been laid before Mr. Brown's promotion, and even as I entered the room Joe brought some savory mess in from the galley. I think the doctor—for so they called the ship's cook—was stimulated to unusual exertions on my behalf. At any rate he had some little skill in plain cooking, and the fare was palatable, even savory. Dr. Tooker presently stepped out of the second mate's cabin. His face was very grave.

"Has there been any change?" I asked.

"None, my child, unless a change for the worse."

"Has he recovered consciousness or spoken?"

"Neither the one nor the other."

"Is there nothing to be done?"

It was the foolish, futile question that everybody asks under such circumstances, knowing full well that if there were anything, it would be done at once. 'Tis hardened humanity indeed that could refuse or neglect the appeal of helpless suffering.

"Nothing, nothing, Miss Martindale. We are always

in God's hands, as the mate said. You will find tender hearts sometimes beneath these rude exteriors," continued the doctor impressively.

"I know it, sir. Indeed, I have found it so."

"Found what, miss?" asked the captain, coming out from his cabin.

"Found kind hearts, sir, under"—I was going to say rough exteriors, but I concluded it would not be well under the circumstances, so I finished with these words—"under rough pea jackets."

"That you may, miss. As a rule, there ain't no kinder hearts in human bein's than them as beats in shipmasters' breasts, though I'll admit that the hands for'ard don't generally think so, bein' an ungracious lot an' only amenable to discipline by force, as it were."

"I don't know about them, captain, but your conduct to me furnishes an illustration."

"Illustration of what, ma'am?" asked the captain, beaming.

Evidently the old man wanted to hear more. Well, he should have his desire.

"Sir," said I, "I know not how to thank you for having received me as a guest on board your ship, a poor, penniless, unfriended girl in desperate straits, to have taken me in without money or without price."

"Why, Lord love you! Miss Martindale, you're givin' me credit for what I don't deserve. Not but what if I'd seed you, I'd 'a' done it any way. Helpin' feemales in distress is a thing I've never shirked, as

Missus Harks'll tell you. But your passage was paid in good, hard money afore I consented to receive you."

"My passage paid!" I exclaimed. I turned to the clergyman. "Dr. Tooker, did you——?"

"Alas, my dear, I have with difficulty scraped money enough together to pay my own, and were it not for the great kindness of Captain Harks, I fear I should have been obliged to work my passage, if so be that were possible."

The captain snorted with a mixture of amusement and derision.

"Now, parson, what on earth'd you be good for on a ship?"

"Nothing, I fear," answered Dr. Tooker ruefully, "unless it would be to elevate the moral tone of the men."

"There's somethin' in that," said the captain, "and you do come in handy in case anybody's dead or dyin', like our poor friend yonder."

The captain had the common idea of the utility of a clergyman at sea or elsewhere. Meanwhile, I had been slowly digesting the extraordinary statement I had just heard.

"And do you mean to tell me, captain, that my passage was paid?"

"In course, madam; don't you know it was paid?"

"Oh, certainly," I said quickly, "I expected that it would be, but I didn't know that it had been done. From whom did you receive the money?"

"Why, Brown, certainly. Twenty good guineas it was, too."

So that was the influence that had opened the cabin of the *Potomac* to receive me. Twenty guineas from a penniless sailor. Where had he got that money? Had he pawned Sir Percy's ring for forty guineas and given me half? He had professed to be without money, at least he had had no compunction in taking the coachman's money and in taking my ring, and—I was hot with indignation, but it would not do to show it then.

"Dinner's ready, Captain Harks, sir," said Joe at this moment.

"Call Mr. Jackson," said the captain. "Ma'am, fall to."

He took his place at the head of the table, pointed me to my place at the right. Mr. Jackson, bearing evidence of a recent ablution, came out from his cabin and sat opposite me. Dr. Tooker took his place, and after invoking the divine blessing, we began upon the meal.

"I thought that Mr. Brown would now eat in the cabin," said I at the first convenient opportunity, "since you have made him an officer and a gentleman."

"Right you are, miss, but you see somebody's got to look after the ship. When I finishes my meal, an' bein' a considerate shipmaster I allus eats in a hurry, I goes up on deck an' relieves Mr. Brown. Then he comes down. It'd never do to have all the officers below at once."

"I see," said I.

And thereupon I commenced dawdling over my meal. I had promised not to address Mr. Brown on any occa-

sion in any way, but what I had heard put a new face on the situation, and I determined to have a few words with him. I knew the captain would soon go on deck, and from the way he was gobbling his food, it was evident that his departure was the question of a few moments, and I believed that Mr. Jackson would also retire so long as it was his watch in. I knew Dr. Tooker would return to Mr. Eccles, and my sailor and I would be alone.

It happened just as I had expected. In an incredibly short time—none of these men made any long play with knife and fork—Brown came down the steps and took his place at the table. At last we were alone together. He bowed gracefully enough to me, it must be admitted —where had the fellow got such manners?—as he entered, and seating himself without more ado, helped himself to the provender and began his supper.

I take it that it must be embarrassing for anyone to be stared at while he makes his meal. I am not ashamed to say that, having finished my own repast, I idled with my fork and looked rather fixedly at my *vis-a-vis*. He sustained my glances with admirable indifference. His table manners were quite as good as his other manners, and he would have taken no shame from his conduct anywhere I had seen him. He progressed deliberately through his meal in absolute silence until the end. At its close he helped himself to a glass of wine, lifted it, and looked toward me. My own glass half full sat before me.

"May I have the honor of taking a glass of wine

with you, madam? " he asked in a most formal and courteous manner.

" I do not drink wine with common sailors, my man," I answered impudently.

" But with second mates, madam? " he went on, smiling slightly.

" There is so little remove between them that the difference is immaterial," said I tartly.

I was wishful to provoke him, but I absolutely failed.

" I thank you," he replied, " for the gentle, gracious, courteous reproof. At least, if I may not drink wine with you, I may drink to you. Your health, your happiness, madam! "

He tossed off his glass with a great air, and then rose.

" Have I your permission to withdraw? " he asked.

" I am not the captain of the ship, sir," replied I.

" And if you were? "

" You should not only withdraw from the cabin, but go back to the fo'c's'l, where you belong."

" Quite so, madam. I fit the fo'c's'l doubtless better than a traveling companion, and my manners are more suited to the deck of a ship than a lady's cabin."

He bowed again, this time rather curtly, and turned on his heel abruptly.

" Stay, sir," I interposed, " I would have a word with you."

" And what conditions have brought me the ineffable condescension of this favor? " he asked, looking back and surveying me.

But I was quite able to play that sort of a game,

and my own stare was as cool and determined, and I flattered myself vastly more insolent, than his.

"The only question that can lie between us is a question of money, sir."

"Of money, madam? I have none, but if I had, it would be at your service."

"You are at least twenty guineas poorer than you were when I met you, I take it," I interposed swiftly.

"What mean you?"

"Captain Harks, whose guest I fancied I was, has been maladroit enough to inform me that I am not so much his as yours."

"Mine, madam. And in what way?"

"Did you not pay twenty guineas for my passage money to Captain Harks?"

For once I had him discomfited. He flushed slowly, and looked absolutely at loss. I confess that the situation made up to me for the many humiliations I had suffered in attempting to cross swords with this man.

"Well, sir," I began, after I had waited what I conceived to be a reasonable time, "is the statement true?"

"I—I—" he began falteringly, and then stopped.

"Did you pay Captain Harks twenty guineas for my passage?"

"I am sorry to say that I did, madam," he managed to choke out.

"Sorry!" exclaimed I, "and why sorry, pray?"

"Sorry that you knew it, not that I paid it."

"And did you pawn Sir Percy's ring for twice the amount you said, and use the other moiety in this way?

You might at least have told me of it. I might have preferred to dispose of such moneys in my own way, instead of being beholden to a total stranger."

He put up his hand.

"I pray you, madam. It was not Sir Percy's ring money that I spent. I have told you—I mean, I always will tell you the exact truth about everything."

"Your future intentions are matters of little moment, sir. I am concerned with the present, or, rather, with the past. Where did you, a common sailor, get twenty guineas?"

"Madam, you have no right to ask such a question."

"Have I not?" was my counter question. "It seems to me, when you expend it upon me, that I have every right to ask. You had no money apparently at the inn in Little Hampton, or——"

"The savings of a lifetime," he muttered vaguely.

"I shall repay you," I said. "How I know not, but I shall do it. I will be beholden to no man for money. I shall return it."

"Madam, God forbid!"

"Nay, do not stop me," I continued vehemently. "You may kill men for me and rescue me from all sorts of perils and dangers as you have done, but I will not take money from you or from anyone. It shall be paid in full. Here."

I was wearing another ring, an emerald, a present my father had fetched to me when he came from India, the spoil, no doubt, of some heathen temple. I had fitted it to a ring.

"Take this," I cried, tearing it from my finger. "'Tis worth many times the twenty guineas, and when I have the money I will redeem it from you."

"And do you think so meanly of me, madam, that I would exact a pledge from you? Your word of payment will be sufficient."

"Nay, nay," was my insistent reply, "unless you take the ring, I swear I shall never speak to you again."

I laid it down on the table near him.

"Madam," he said, picking it up, "I take it not because I fear, or have need, or lack confidence, or even because it is a stone of price—I have sailed to the East and I recognize its value—but because you have worn it."

"How dare you?" cried I. "Do you think because you have been moved from the fo'c's'l to the quarter-deck, you are at my level?"

"Were I to be translated from hell to heaven, madam, I should not so attain," he said, going out—and again with the honors of war, it must be confessed, and my ring to boot.

My sailor must have been reading romances, and yet he had thrown his graceful words at me with all the *savoir faire* of a gentleman. Where had he got twenty guineas? Mystery upon mystery! Wherever I touched him, I ran against the inexplicable. I had to the full a woman's curiosity, and every interview with this man but stimulated it the more. I sat for a time plunged in reverie. This habit of introspection was growing upon me, but I submit that I had had enough adventures in

the last thirty-six hours to effect a complete revolution in my being. Thirty-six hours? Aye, it was not quite that, for it was yet early in the evening, and I take it it must have been nine or half after when I had been seized in the yard of the Sussex inn. Now I was embarked upon a long voyage, uncertain of the welcome that awaited me at the end, unbefriended save by chance acquaintances, my fate apparently inextricably tangled with that of a man who, whatever he was, was unexplainable by any knowledge, experience, or induction that I could bring to bear.

As I sat there I became aware that the wind was blowing constantly harder. We should not be able to have breakfast without fiddles on the table on the morrow unless it moderated during the night. As I unconsciously adjusted myself in my chair at the table to the increased tumbling and pitching of the vessel, the ship herself rather prefigured my own condition, driven by the winds of adversity and tossed upon the sea of circumstance. How would it end? If I had only my father with me, I should not greatly have cared. I might even have enjoyed the adventure now that it was over, and gotten the pleasure which I always took in being on the sea. I was thankful that I proved an excellent sailor, and that not the slightest qualm of *mal de mer* annoyed me. Here I was alone on a ship full of men, none of whom by any chance could be thought my equals except Dr. Tooker—and he a poor old clergyman. I smiled whimsically as I thought of how Miss Clapperton's ideas of the proprieties would be outraged by my present

position. Nobody meant me any harm, I was sure, and one at least had shown himself abundantly able and willing to protect and succor me in adverse circumstances.

I wished that I knew more about Brown. I should have to get at Parson Tooker on the morrow, and see if I could not extract from him more definite information concerning the man. So my thoughts ran on until eight bells were struck, when Mr. Jackson relieved the watch. Thereafter my sailor came down into the cabin, and with a bow to me entered his own stateroom. Dr. Tooker thrust his head out of the second mate's cabin a few moments after and beckoned to me.

"He's going, I think," he whispered. "Will you tell the captain?"

I ran and tapped on the captain's door, and soon he and I joined the clergyman by the bedside of poor Mr. Eccles. It was almost over.

"I thought," said the parson, "that you would better be here."

I nodded. I understood the feeling.

"It doesn't seem so lonesome and dreary," he continued softly, "if there's a woman by."

The captain, who usually wore his cap above and below decks, removed it and stood in silence leaning against the bulkhead with folded arms, looking down upon the white-faced mate. I sat on the little stool which Dr. Tooker drew conveniently near the berth for me and took the man's hand in my own, while Dr. Tooker knelt at the foot and said the Church's prayers of commendation. That was all. The man's life just went

quietly and slowly out without a sound, save the creaking of the timbers, the swift wash of the waters alongside, and the low prayers of the old priest.

The exact moment of departure I could not tell, but as I looked upon the still face, I knew that the soul of the mate had embarked upon a longer cruise on a greater ocean.

"He's gone, miss," said the captain with more solemnity than usual. "His anchor's aweigh on a new v'yage, on other waters than them what wash this earth."

I rose, a little sob in my throat—it was all so dreary and so sad—and then I bent and kissed the man on the forehead and turned away.

"That was well done, ma'am," remarked the captain. "I make no doubt that poor Eccles'll feel better for that."

And with that I turned to my own cabin, where I lay a long time thinking strange thoughts and dreaming strange dreams before I could get to sleep.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHICH SHOWS A SEA BLOODHOUND ON OUR TRACK

I THINK it must have been very late, perhaps midnight, before I dozed off, for I slept soundly until quite late in the morning. Indeed, it was Dr. Tooker's tapping on my door which finally awakened me.

"Yes," I cried, as I became conscious of his knock.

"Mistress Martindale," he called, "such breakfast as we are able to offer will be ready in a few moments, and after that we are to bury poor Mr. Eccles. I thought you would wish to be present."

"That I do," I answered, at once rising and beginning to dress.

This was the more difficult because the ship was now pitching frightfully. Although I was no sailor at the time—I have since learned much about ships and seas—I realized that we must be in the grip of a storm. It was with the utmost difficulty that I could put my clothes on properly. Never in my life had I so wished for the service of a maid. In general I had been accustomed to regard such persons as more or less useless, but now—well, any woman would know what it must have been to dress under such circumstances. There was

no help for it. I had to get along as best I might. My sailor was equal to most anything in the way of assistance, but here I had to draw the line.

Fortunately, as I said, I was not affected by the motion, and except for the great inconvenience, I should not have minded it. Finally, I managed to get into my clothes, and opening the door, went into the cabin.

We had to make a standing meal of cold beef and hard bread, washed down by strong coffee, which the cook had managed, with some difficulty and at the risk of scalding himself, to prepare. It was Mr. Jackson's watch on deck, eight bells not having struck, and Mr. Brown was in the cabin with the captain and Dr. Tooker. They made me welcome, proffering me what food they had with kindly civility. I had much trouble in keeping my feet while I ate, and finally sat down in one of the corners of the cabin, where Mr. Brown assumed to stand by me to offer me assistance in case it should be necessary. I submitted passively, my mind at that time being upon other things, for Dr. Tooker told me that so soon as I had finished my breakfast, all hands would be summoned to bury the dead.

I had been present at funerals on shore, but never had I seen one on the sea. I shall not soon forget the scene. The sky was gray and leaden. There was no sun anywhere, and the wind howled fiercely through the top hamper. The ship was under close-reefed tops'ls and storm staysail. The motion had been bad enough in the cabin. On deck it was worse. Indeed, I had scarcely stepped over the hatch combing when I felt myself be-

ing hurled violently to leeward. It was Brown, with that hateful readiness he ever manifested, who interposed to save me. He seemed to have no great difficulty in keeping his footing, for he half led, half dragged me across the deck, and actually stoppered me, as he called it, to the mizzen rigging to windward. There I had a view of everything which took place.

Lashed on the gratings amidships lay a long white bulky object which I soon discovered was the body of poor Mr. Eccles sewed up in his hammock. Some of the sailors, by the direction of Mr. Brown, rigged up a grating, the edge resting on the rail to leeward. The men were all on deck and in readiness, having been summoned by Mr. Jackson. Dr. Tooker in a long white surplice, which the wind whipped about his legs as if it had been a woman's frock, now came forward, prayer book in hand. The men undid the lashings, lifted the body from its place, and laid it on the grating. At a signal from the captain all hats went off, and Dr. Tooker began to read. As he did so, Brown stepped forward and covered the body with an American flag. The wind was so fierce that he had to hold it there with his hands, its red stripes and blue field making a spot of brilliant color in the gray air of the bleak morning.

The men stood about, grim-faced and silent, swaying to and fro as the ship was rocked and tossed by the up-bearing seas. No one could distinguish the doctor's words amid the scream of the gale, but ne read on and on until he came to the appointed place, when he looked toward the captain. The master raised his hand; the

attentive sailors lifted the grating; my sailor drew aside the flag, and the long body flashed a moment in the misty air and then fell splashing into the dull, lead-colored sea, and was gone.

The men were dismissed by a wave of the captain's hand. Dr. Tooker followed the latter below into the cabin; from forward somewhere came eight strokes of the bell in two couplets; some one bellowed:

"All the starboard watch."

Mr. Jackson yielded up the trumpet to Mr. Brown, and the routine of the day began.

Now, by chance I had been secured to the rigging just abaft the horse-block, where my sailor took his station. Neither of us broke the silence, if silence is the right word for a scene where the air was filled with the roar of the wind and the sound of great waves beating the bows of the ship as she forced her way through them.

Presently Mr. Brown turned to me and, hollowing his hand and bending his head so I could hear, asked me if I wished to go below. I shook my head. There was something in the wild scene about me which appealed strangely to me, and I was in no mind for the close and stuffy air of the tightly shut-in cabin. I had taken the precaution to bring a heavy boat cloak with me and a knitted cap, such as fishermen are wont to wear, which, by a flash of inspiration, I had purchased at the last moment in Portsmouth, and which kept my hair from blowing wildly about. Although the spray and waves broke over the bows of the ship forward, none

of it came aft where I was. I was dry and warm and comfortable, and save for the melancholy thoughts superinduced by the scene in which we had just taken part, I was reasonably happy.

The ship, of course, first engaged my attention, but its possibilities of interest were soon exhausted, and then I turned and surveyed the sea. Had I been a sailor, my first glance when I came on deck would have been sent aloft to see what sail she carried, and whether everything was all right, and my second would have been sent to the horizon.

But I was nót a sailor, and it was not until some time after the funeral that I surveyed the ocean about us. I was surprised beyond measure to see up to windward, perhaps a mile away, a vessel, apparently a brig-of-war. Sometimes I caught a glimpse, as our ship rose and fell on the top of a gigantic wave, of a white streak along the sides of the stranger, with black squares which seemed to indicate guns. The other vessel flew no flag. A hasty inspection of the horizon round about revealed nothing else. The *Potomac* and the stranger were apparently alone upon the ocean.

I stared at the companion vessel a long time wondering who and what she might be. She, too, was under double-reefed tops'ls, and her course of sailing was parallel to our own. I observed that from time to time my sailor turned from his watchful inspection of our own vessel and shot long and earnest glances up to windward at the stranger. Finally I determined to learn what he thought of her. I plucked him by the coat, and

when he turned his head and bent his ear to my lips, I asked:

"Who and what is that ship?"

"Can't you guess?" he answered.

"She hath a familiar look," replied I. "Is it——"

He nodded.

"The *Porcupine*."

"Sir Percy Reade's ship?" I cried.

"Aye."

"How do you know it?"

"A ship has an identity just like a woman," he replied. "There are a thousand marks that indicate its personality. The experienced seaman is rarely mistaken."

"Are you sure that it is the *Porcupine*?"

"Certain of it. Wait."

He stepped down from the horse-block, turned aft, and took up his position by my side. In spite of the lashing, I had some difficulty in steadying myself, and his arm extended itself behind my back and grasped one of the shrouds. Whether it was to steady himself or to steady me, I know not, but it answered for both purposes, and by turning our heads we could not merely look into each other's eyes, but talk into each other's ears, which made it much easier. Indeed, the high rail gave some shelter from the wind, and except on a windward roll, conversation was not impossible.

"Think you that Sir Percy is on board?"

"Certainly," he answered. "They would never have sailed without him."

"How comes he there?"

"'Tis an easy matter to understand. Some one must have released him earlier than we thought. He has learned of your departure on this ship. She was cleared for the Capes of Virginia. The wind has been fair. He could figure our course as well as if he had been aboard. His ship sails three fathoms to our two, and there he is. 'Tis hard fortune."

"What is his purpose, think you?"

"I know what mine would be were I in his place."

"What?" I asked incautiously.

"I'd have you back if I sailed the world around after you."

There was a deal more fire and passion in this remark than the circumstances warranted. I should have drawn away had I possessed the power, but as it was, I was more or less helpless. To be sure, I could have gone below, but that would have left me in doubt on all sorts of things upon which I very much desired enlightenment. I must know further, and to know further must perforce endure whatever chanced at the moment.

"But he will not dare to use violence toward the ship of a free nation?" was my next question.

"Madam," was the bitter reply, "your British sea captains have become so habituated to disregarding the rights and privileges of the free ships of a free nation that I imagine there is little he would stop at if he could come at us."

"But surely that would be an outrage. We are at peace with America."

"Ostensibly, yes," was the answer, "but when I shall have delivered these papers"—he touched his breast—"to President Madison, we shall be at war with England."

"But if he offers any violence?"

"He would only be anticipating by a few weeks the course of events."

"But you," I ran on impetuously, "you have defended me so bravely, you would not let him take me, would you?"

"Miss Martindale," he replied, "if I could assure your safety by giving up my life, I would do it. If I could purchase immunity and freedom for you with my heart's blood, I would pour it out gladly, but what could I do?"

"Why, this ship is twice the size of that one," I answered. "Surely——"

"You see those black spots on that white line," he interrupted. "Each one of those means a gun. That little brig, which could sail all around us, could knock us into a cocked hat and sink us in an hour."

"Yes, but if it comes to boarding this vessel——"

"Our crew numbers perhaps thirty all told. There must be a hundred and forty hearty seamen on yonder brig."

"Then we are helpless?"

"I fear so."

"And if he comes to take me, I must go."

"I see no other way."

"Is there nothing that can be done, then?"

"I can go with you."

"What good will that do?"

"But little, and yet I can keep you out of his hands."

"How?"

"By killing him on his own quarterdeck."

"But they would hang you at once for that."

"You would be safe, though."

"I cannot accept safety on such terms!" I cried.

"You see," he said, "if you had only shot higher in the carriage, or if you had only let me kill him when I had a chance in the inn, all this trouble would not have come upon you."

"I don't regret my actions," I answered. "I have been marvelously protected heretofore, and I have no doubt God will disclose some way for me in the future. This I say, though, that I will die by my own hands rather than be placed at the mercy of that man again."

"That is well said," answered my sailor grimly. "Indeed, I could almost relieve you of the necessity of killing yourself rather than that should occur."

"Thank you," said I, humbly enough, "but if it is to be done, I will not require it of your hands. Upon my own head be it."

There was silence for a little space, and then I looked at my sailor again. His jaws were tightly locked, his hands were clenched. I never saw such an expression of hopeless rage and indignation on a human face.

"Why doesn't he come down and board us now?" I asked, laying my hand upon his arm.

"'Tis impossible," was the reply. "See how the ship pitches. No communication is possible in such a sea."

"Then we are safe enough for the present?"

"So long as the wind holds, yes."

"Would that the storm might carry us across the Atlantic!"

"Aye, madam, but 'tis not to be thought of."

"Will it be of long duration, think you?" I asked.

"It will blow itself out in twenty-four hours."

"You give me cold comfort, Mr. Brown."

"You are a soldier's daughter, madam, and no longer a child. 'Tis best that I should tell you the truth, and that you should know it."

"Thank you," said I, grateful for this appreciation of my character.

"And you will not be the only sufferer, I take it, should he get alongside."

"What mean you?"

"Great Britain is very straitened for men, and she is none too scrupulous as to where she gets them. If Sir Percy's boarding officer sees any young seamen who strike his fancy when the crew is mustered, as it will be at his demand, he'll claim them as Englishmen and take them aboard."

"But are they Englishmen?"

"Every man of them is American born and bred."

"Well, then?"

"It will make no difference. His need and his power match—he will take what he pleases. God, how the men hate it!"

"Is it so very terrible, then, to serve under the British flag?"

"Madam, the lot of a sailor is bad enough in any service. He is a dog, and he is treated like one on the best of ships. But in a British ship, 'tis hell itself."

"You are uncomplimentary, sir!" I cried resentfully.

"'Tis the truth that hurts, not my words. Why, look you, so fearful are the men that I have known a man to cut off his hand with a boarding ax in order that, so maimed, he might be unavailable. These men yonder have homes, wives and children, sweethearts, mothers, waiting them back in the United States. To be transshipped to a British man-of-war means an indefinite cruise, with a return, it may be, never; treatment that would break the spirit of the bravest; risk of loss of life in action under an alien flag. We have suffered and submitted until, by Heaven! there shall be no more of it. If our country will give us a chance to display our manhood and skill under our own flag, we'll show your proud Britons of what material we're made."

"You speak like a fighting man," said I.

"I am—I shall be. Every American seaman will be given the opportunity, and we have some frigates that I know of that will hold their own in the day of battle."

"You think, then, that Sir Percy will take the men on this ship?"

"I know it."

"But surely a plea for mercy——"

"I only know of one plea for mercy that was ever heard by a British captain under such conditions."

"And what was that?"

"A friend of mine shipped on the bark *Jefferson*,

which was overhauled by the frigate *Leopard*. Her captain stripped the ship of men. He took every young and vigorous man on her muster roll except one. He left barely enough hands, the officers turning to, to work the ship to her port. He laughed at the protests and pleas of them all, except this one man."

"And what moved him to mercy in that case?"

"He was the bos'n of the ship and had his wife aboard. As he couldn't take the woman, he said he wouldn't separate the pair, and so the man got free. That's the only case where mercy was shown that I know of."

"But would not Captain Harks protest?"

"Protest! He would rage and curse until he was black in the face, but what good would it do? When it comes to force, a score of men cannot fight seven times their number, nor do the couple of carronades forward there, for defense against river pirates or such like, avail against the nine long broadside guns, to say nothing of the pivot on yonder brig. No, Mistress Martindale, the chances against his picking us up were a hundred to one. The deviation of a point in course will send ships far apart in a long chase. But Fortune has favored him. Perhaps she has lavished enough favors on us in the last two days, and wants to strike a balance. There he is, and there he'll stay unless we can shake him off."

"But will Captain Harks make no effort?"

"To be sure he will. He knows all that I have been telling you, about the men, that is, as well as I, but——"

"Well, why doesn't he change his course now?" I interrupted.

"This is the only course possible in such a gale. A power higher than that of England or America constrains us now. The passions of men sometimes must submit to the will of God, and this is a time."

"Thank God for that."

"You might well do so, madam, for if I may judge, do you not think that eyes from that brig yonder are watching us even as closely as we scan them? Whatever may have been Sir Percy Reade's passion for you in the beginning, now at least 'tis complicated with every other feeling that can incite a mortal man. He has been insulted, mocked, derided, fleeced, robbed of—oh, if I had only killed him!"

"You have done your best for me," said I, all the coquetry driven out by the seriousness of the situation, "and if I am lost, it will not be for lack of gallant endeavor to save me."

"There is another thing you forgot, madam, in your peril."

"And what is that?"

"My dispatches. Can I trust you?"

"Can you ask me such a question?" I answered, looking him straight in the face.

"By Heaven! I'll do it, although you are an English girl. You'll not betray me?"

"To keep your confidence is a small requital for your assistance," said I.

"The papers of which I speak contain letters to

various officials from the British ministry announcing their intention of adhering to the Orders in Council. Copies of them were obtained by our minister, and given to me with instructions to lay them before President Madison and Congress at the earliest possible moment. They contain plans as well for a descent upon our coast, for it is known in England that maintenance of the orders means war, and they wish to be beforehand. In some way the fact that the papers had been copied was discovered, and by direction of the ministry the whole power of the English Government was put to recapture them. I have them safe here, although I have no doubt that Sir Percy, like every other English naval officer on the seas, has instructions to recover them, if possible."

"I see," I replied.

"I must get them into the hands of our President without delay," he continued. "The happiness and welfare of the helpless people on our undefended coast line depend upon it."

"Then you yourself are in danger should Sir Percy overhaul us?"

"I shall be the first one to be pressed," was the reply.

"But you are an officer."

"By courtesy only. I am really rated as an able seaman, and perhaps I am the best seaman on board."

He said it without hesitation, as if he were simply announcing an ordinary and unimportant fact.

"I don't know what the rights or the wrongs of the case are," I replied, "but at any rate my sympathies

are with you. What shall you do in case we are boarded?"

"Sink the papers over the side."

"Oh," said I, "would it not be better to make a copy of them and to give up the originals and retain the copy, which probably no one will suspect is in your possession? Would not copies serve as well as originals?"

"My word would answer, so far as that goes, could I get speech with the President."

Who was this man, flashed into my mind again, that upon his word might depend peace or war between so weak a country as America and so great a country as England?

"There is something," he continued, after reflecting a moment, "in your suggestion. By yielding up one set of papers I may be able to preserve the others. The sea is a strange field upon which to adventure. No one knows what may happen on a cruise until the anchor is down in the home port, and events are not always determined absolutely even then. Your advice is good, madam. I thank you for it. I shall adopt it."

"And I," I said, "if I can help— God forgive me!" I cried, stopping suddenly, "am I a traitor to my country?"

"I shall not call upon you for any help, madam. In your case I give rather than receive assistance."

"And nobly have you done so," I replied, taking him by the hand. "Whatever betides, I shall never forget that."

Captain Harks, dressed in a heavy pea jacket with a sou'wester tied under his chin, now came on deck. He nodded to me, stepped over to the horse-block, and fixed the glass which he had in his hands upon the stranger to windward. It was astonishing the ease and grace with which the burly sailor balanced himself upon the horse-block, and the steadiness with which he kept his glance fixed upon the brig. He looked at her long and earnestly. Finally he shut to the glass with a snap, and turned to my sailor who had stepped to his side.

"'Tis the British war brig," he said gloomily. "Damn her!"

"The *Porcupine*, think you, captain?"

"Aye," was the curt answer. "I lay alongside of her in Portsmouth for two weeks, an' know her face as I know the face of my wife or my own in the glass."

"We are safe enough now, sir."

"Certainly," returned the captain. "As long as this gale holds we're both helpless."

"And when it breaks?"

"I'll try runnin' an' dodgin'." He shook his head gloomily. "'Tis useless. Would God I had a ship of equal force under me, a stout crew of Americans to fight for that flag! How long will our country stand this cursed insolence?"

"Not one minute longer, Captain Harks, than I can get to President Madison."

"What do you mean?" asked the captain.

"I have dispatches here which will mean instant war."

"Oh," said the captain, "I remember when a berth as seaman was bespoke for you, an' we were requested by our consignees to wait for you, that somethin' or other was said about dispatches. Then you are not——"

"Now, I am just what I give myself out to be, William Brown, your second mate."

"Well, Mr. Brown," returned the captain, "we'll do our damnedest to get away from yon hell-hound, but if we can't——"

"None shall blame you, captain, in any event. You know I told you something of the story of this young lady?"

"I remember."

"The man who caused all the trouble is the commander of that brig."

"Great God!" cried the captain, "I swear I'd rather sink the *Potomac*, though every dollar I got in the world's in her, than let him come alongside."

"You must not do that, captain," said I, although my lip was quivering, and my heart throbbed terribly. "You must not do that. Your property and the lives of your people are not to be jeopardized for me."

"Or for me," said my sailor quietly. "We have managed to outwit Sir Percy so far. Perhaps even in the last extremity Providence may help us once again."

CHAPTER TWELVE

IN WHICH I PROPOSE TO MYSELF A WILD PLAN AS A LAST RESORT

THE most miserable day—at least so I thought in my blind ignorance of what the future held—of my life dragged on its weary length. There were no books on the ship; I had forgotten to provide any. There was nothing to do. I could only stay on deck, enduring the rude buffeting of the storm which grew rather worse than better, for limited periods. I had slept during the day before and the night to the limit of a healthy capacity. Discussion of the situation and its possibilities with Captain Harks and Dr. Tooker threw no new light on the problem. If the wind would only moderate when the night fell sufficiently to allow the captain to play tricks with the ship, he would try to get away, but until that change in the weather came, there was nothing to be done.

In his watch off, my sailor did try valiantly to hearten me up a little during the afternoon, but I was too miserable to respond to his conversational attempts and he presently retired to his own cabin, to sleep, I fancied, until it became time for him to take the deck once more. Sleep! How could the man sleep when my

honor and his life and his career and everything that a man ought to hold dear were in jeopardy? I did not refer to myself. I was nothing to him, as he was nothing to me, and yet our fortunes had been so interwoven in the past forty-eight hours that I could not but dwell upon him.

Nobody gave me any comfort at all. The captain forgot my presence, and swore viciously whenever the subject was brought to his attention. Mr. Jackson exercised more restraint, but he could offer nothing. Dr. Tooker alone did not give up hope. His trust was stayed upon a higher Power, and indeed unless such a Power interposed, the situation, provided we did not succeed in shaking off the brig, was hopeless so far as I was concerned.

Just before the beginning of the first dog watch, Mr. Brown came out of his cabin bearing a paper in his hand.

"Have I your permission to address you?" he said.

We were alone in the cabin at the time.

"Certainly," said I, "if you have anything to say that throws any light on the problem."

"Nothing as to that, unfortunately. I am now in the disagreeable position of one who seeks a favor."

"There is no favor that you could ask me that I should not be obliged in honor and gratitude to grant."

"The fact that you are so obliged is the most disagreeable feature of the situation," he went on gravely.

"I am ashamed," I replied contritely, "to have put the matter in that way. I am happy to do any favor

in reason, glad that you will give me the opportunity. What is it that you wish?"

"I have here," he said, displaying what he carried, "the original papers and the duplicate set. The duplicate set I wish to intrust to your care; the originals I will keep on my own person, and allow them to be seized if the worst comes to the worst. They will never think of searching you. If you are taken on board the ship, I will be pressed with you, and in the end I swear that I will kill him rather than let him harm you. We may be rescued, we may escape in some way, who knows! Will you keep the papers for me?"

"But would my keeping the papers involve the betrayal of my country?"

"Madam," he said solemnly, "I think that you can in honor accede to my request; for, look you, the British Government is determined upon war, and so, too, is the Government of the United States. There are some in our Congress, not without influence and power, who would fain preserve peace at all hazards. These papers will persuade this minority to act with the others. The declaration is bound to come anyway, and when it does come, I have no doubt that the first gun will unify all parties. It is better, from our point of view, however, that the unity should precede, not follow, the declaration. For the rest, I desire to check a threatened descent upon our coast which has no military value whatever, and is simply a harrying raid by a few rapid frigates which are to be dispatched across the ocean. You are not in any way jeopardizing the cause of your country

by carrying the papers for me for a short space. Indeed, when you have the papers, I am entirely in your power, for you would have only to disclose your possession of them to make my fate even harder than it really would be."

"I do not like this act, but——"

"You can refuse, madam," he said proudly enough, but with a visible reluctance, reaching his hand out for the papers as he spoke.

"But I will do it."

"On my honor, I see no vital reason why you shouldn't," urged the man.

"On your honor, sir?" I queried.

"The honor of a"—he answered quick as a flash and then pulled himself together—"of a common sailor, a second mate. Believe me, madam, 'tis not only the great in rank who have notions of honor."

"I do believe you," I replied. "Give me the papers."

He handed them to me.

"I shall keep them ever about my person, and hold them inviolate as a sacred trust. Indeed," I said with some spirit, "I have no love for England that she permits such a man as Sir Percy Reade to command her ships and to assault defenseless, friendless maidens like myself!"

"There, madam, you wrong your countrymen. There are thousands of brave hearts who would resent that treatment in your behalf even as I did myself. 'Tis a pity, though, that such men as Reade yonder are in positions of trust and responsibility."

"Did you know him, or had you heard of him, before I came across your path?" I asked.

"Only by reputation. Friends of mine, sailors like myself, have fallen into his clutches. One of them escaped from that very ship. God, how I pity any American man that is taken aboard of her!"

"And pity any woman in like case," I said, my lip trembling.

"Indeed, madam, I do, and 'tis simple truth I would give my life to get you free of that ship."

"God will open a way, my child," said Dr. Tooker, coming into the cabin from his stateroom at this moment. "I have faith. I am convinced that you have not been miraculously preserved so far to be cast away and lost at this hour."

"I hope so. I pray so," I answered brokenly.

"He raised up a defender for you before."

"Yes."

"And that defender is here now."

"But, doctor," broke in the fierce voice of my sailor, "the fact that I am so helpless is what kills me. I would to God I had choked him to death when I had my hands on his lying throat."

"'Thou shalt do no murder!'" said the doctor softly.

"The doctor is right," I interposed.

"Think you, then, that 'tis wrong to fight in a good cause because blood is spilled and lives are taken?" asked Brown with emphasis.

"Nay," said the doctor, "'Blessed be the Lord who

teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight' hath not lost its meaning, though 'twas writ so many thousand years ago. In defense of life or liberty or honor, at the call of duty, life may be hazarded, and if hazarded, lost or taken."

"Just so," replied Brown. "It was in defense of the lady's honor that I grappled with him, and I would that I had ended him then and there. Think you what it will mean if he overhauls us and throws a boarding party upon our decks? Men will be haled from the ship ruthlessly. I know what that brig is. The lady here will be taken. You know what the powers of a captain of a ship are. She will be helpless. I see no way for it but to pistol him or cut him down on his own quarter-deck."

"I cannot have it so. If he were killed in the heat of conflict, it would be different, but that would be assassination," I cried.

"His life or your honor?" asked my sailor, looking fiercely at me.

"Nay, you have not the alternatives right," I answered with a firmness matching his own. "There is a better way to put it."

"What is it?" he asked eagerly.

"My own life or my own honor."

"Yes."

"And by my own hand."

"Madam," said my sailor, seizing my unresisting hand, "before God, I swear you are the bravest of us all!"

"I cannot think it will come to that," said the old parson tenderly. "May God have mercy upon His children," he prayed feelingly, lifting up his arms. "We are in Thy hands, O Lord; without Thee we have no succor. Do Thou help us," he ran on brokenly.

In the thought that he had so coupled us together, I did not hear the conclusion of his prayers, for an idea had sprung into my brain at the doctor's words, an idea which seemed to promise a way out of the terrible danger we were in, a mad, fantastic, impossible idea from which I shuddered, at which my heart suddenly stopped its beating, but whose possibilities and probabilities I could no longer ignore.

I stole a look at my sailor as he stood with bent shoulders and bowed head, waiting the conclusion of the parson's prayer. Had such an idea occurred to him also? Certainly not. He would never dare. Such a proposal could only come from me. At one moment my heart was lightened at the thought; at another it lay like lead within my bosom. It was not necessary to mention it then, or to discuss it in any way. We had not come to the last extremity yet. It would take but little time to put my plan into effect, and I would never consent to it or resort to it until the very last moment.

As the doctor concluded—I blame myself that I did not give more attentive heed to his petition, 'tis not that I was irreverent, but I could not escape the sudden thought that came to me—eight bells was struck forward, the starboard watch was called again, the first dog watch was over. It was Mr. Brown's tour of duty

once more, and without a word to me he turned and went on deck.

As for me, in the relief that came to me from my idea, in the anxiety of my position, in the apprehension as to the result of my proposed action, I quite forgot myself. I am ashamed to say that all unmanned—or unwomanned would perhaps be a better phrase—I put my head down on my hands upon the table and cried like any other weaker sister. Dr. Tooker stepped over to me and laid his hand upon my shoulder, as if he had been my father, and much comforted me by his encouraging words. He had a simple faith, that was yet sublime, that God would hear his prayer in behalf of the poor orphan whose sole support and stay in this great extremity was to be found in a Power higher than the earth.

Surely I had been miraculously preserved with these good men about me; and then, as my sobs died down I, too, prayed; prayed that I might have right direction in the course I proposed to take, should the crisis come upon me. I rose strangely helped, calm, composed, ready for my fate.

Donning my cloak and cap, I went on deck again after a while. My sailor assisted me to that comfortable noon abaft the horse-block by the weather mizzen rigging, and there I stood silent a space, letting the fresh wind cool my hot and fevered cheek, and drinking in strength and purpose from the mighty airs that swept the gray face of the old ocean.

Presently Mr. Brown spoke to me.

"You look happier, more relieved!" he exclaimed.

"I have reason to be. I have thought of a plan which, should the worst come to the worst, may save me."

"Thank God for that!" he interrupted eagerly.

"And you, too."

"That's not a matter of so much moment," he said. "What is the plan?"

I was glad the wind had blown color into my cheek, else I must have blushed as he asked the question. I did, I am sure, but he could scarce have noticed it.

"I cannot tell you," was my answer.

"But may I not help?"

"That you may, should it be necessary, for it depends more upon you than you think," I said with a strange sinking of the heart which gave a tremble to my voice.

"Whatever may be my part in it, I shall play it gladly for you, madam," he replied instantly.

I think he would have kissed my hand if there had been opportunity. He looked so eagerly at me from his bright black eyes. I was afraid of him, though he had always been good and kind to me and respectful, save on occasions in which his American boldness made him forget the difference in our stations. Could he have divined what I meant? I could not bear to sustain his glance, which was bent upon me with thoughtful inquiry.

"I would that I knew what is in your mind and heart," he said at last. "I am sure I might help you."

"You shall know in good time, if it be necessary."

"Our friend yonder still keeps in view," he added.

I turned and stared up to windward at the threatening vessel, pitching and tossing like a cork in the great waves. How I hated the man who was probably then staring down at our ship and me! The sight and the consequent thought sealed my wavering resolution once more. Yes, anything would be better than that—anything. If the worst came, I would do it.

I turned and, assisted by my sailor, walked to the companionway and went below. I wanted to be alone to think—to think. Would it answer? Could I do it, after all? The morrow would see. Mr. Jackson had told me that the gale was at its height, but there were indications that it would break early in the night. If our pursuer were in range in the morning, it would have to be done. Well, I should be ready for it. Accordingly I gave strict orders to the cabin boy to call me at the first peep of day when he served coffee to the morning watch. I was not to be caught napping and unprepared. And with his positive assurance that he would not fail me, after our meager supper, I turned in.

But not to sleep for a long time. My situation was too grave, the expedient that had occurred to me too unheard of. They banished rest. Could I do it? What would be the result? My face flamed in waves, my cheeks tingled, my heart throbbed at the thought. Unpleasant, horrible from one point of view as it was, from another it was not particularly depressing. Yet I did not dwell on that phase. I had to do it. There was no other way, unless I allowed Brown to murder the man on his own

deck, or unless I killed myself with my own hand. I did not want my sailor to die as the end of all his endeavors to help me, and certainly I did not want to die myself. Rather than that should happen, I would put my plan into operation.

But it was a miserable situation for a poor lonely girl to find herself in, and at last I cried myself to sleep. Really this habit of tears at which I had mocked in my happier days was getting chronic with me. I should be having hysterics, the vapors, and fainting fits next. Miss Clapperton would actually approve of my habits before I got through unless I made a change.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MY WEDDING DAY—THE MORNING

JOY came not with the morning. Faithful to his orders, Joe called me at break of day, cautioning me as he did so, in answer to my query as to wind and weather, that the gale had blown itself out into a driving rain. Although I was no sailor, I could feel that the violent motion of the ship had sensibly abated. Evidently we were sailing upon a more even keel, although the heel of the ship showed me that she was by the wind on the starboard tack.

I had not come prepared for wet weather, but the captain, who had heard me give directions to be called so early, had left a spare suit of oilskins and a sou'-wester in the cabin, which Joe, whom a few unwonted smiles and kind words had won to enthusiastic devotion to my fortunes, assisted me to put on. I was not a small woman, indeed I was unfashionably tall among my sisters where the diminutive were thought the most desirable, and with my heavy boat cloak underneath the oilskins, they fitted me well enough. There was no mirror in which to see myself. I fancy I must have presented a strange appearance, but my heart was not upon my looks. I was too anxious to think of that for a moment,

and my absorption may thus be measured, for when a woman becomes so engrossed as not to think of her appearance, 'tis a matter of life and death indeed.

Movement was unwieldy, shrouded as I was, but I managed to clamber up the companion steps and get on deck. The little group to windward attracted my attention. The captain was there with his two mates, all three dressed as I was and all three staring to windward. There lay our pursuer, I recognized, following their glances with a sickening sinking of the heart.

They did not observe me at first, until finally something—I know not what, sense of presence you might say—caused my sailor to turn his head. Instantly he saw me he came toward me, and, although the ship was on a more even keel and I needed little steadying, he assisted me across the deck to where the captain stood.

"She's still there," burst out Captain Harks, nodding in response to my salutation. "Curse her! Curse her!" he cried, lifting his fist and shaking it angrily at the brig.

"Have you tried to get free of her?" I asked.

"Tried, ma'am!" roared the captain. "I put the old ship through her paces like a dancing girl. The gale broke before midnight. We flung out false lights, bore away on different courses, but he follered us like a shark follers a death ship. Fortune was with him. What can God be thinkin' on that He gives honest men an' stout ships into the hands of sech damned villains?"

"To say nothin' of females like the missie here,"

muttered Mr. Jackson, who was fully as enraged as his commander.

Brown said nothing, as became a second mate, but his looks spoke volumes. His hands clenched again, and that grim look I had learned to know came into his face. He would assuredly kill that man on his own quarterdeck if he laid hands on me, I thought. My heart thrilled to the knowledge. I suppose I was a very human woman then, and love of power and determination and courage was in my soul. These appealed to me as they do to everyone with red blood in their veins—even a woman. There was no need for speech, for I knew what was behind that harsh, forbidding, resolute exterior of my sailor, and I exulted and gloried in what I saw. For the moment I forgot.

"God!" cried Captain Harks, "why is this thing?"

"We may not question Him," said Dr. Tooker, joining us at the same time.

He was wrapped in an old cloak upon which the rain beat fiercely, but seemed not to mind it.

"No, I suppose not," returned Captain Harks, "but what a plain sailorman like me can't understand's why He permits sech hell-hounds as that to ravage an' plunder helpless ships an' defenseless wimmen."

"And all under a honest flag, too," added Mr. Jackson. "I can't understand for my part what the British people are thinkin' about that they don't prevent it theirselves."

"The people!" cried Brown fiercely, finding voice at last. "They have naught to say about it. The matter

is in the hands of the few. 'Tis only in America that the people rule."

"England," said I, remonstrating gently, "is hard pressed. She fights the battle of the world against Bonaparte, and must have men."

It was an argument in justification which I had often heard, though a poor one, I admit.

"True, madam," returned my sailor, "but the world's battle is not to be won by oppression and injustice."

"I suppose not. You have done everything that you can, captain?" I asked, turning to the shipmaster.

"Everything, by God, but scuttle the ship, ma'am!" returned the captain, stamping furiously upon the deck.

"And what will happen now?"

"You gets your answer yonder," said the old man pointing.

I followed his finger with my eyes. A puff of white smoke broke out from the broadside of the brig seen faintly through the mist and rain, and presently a dull roar came down the wind toward us.

"Is he going to sink us?" I cried.

"'Tis an unshotted gun," answered the other. "A signal for us to heave to; that is, to stop the ship an' lie like beaten dogs waitin' the master's pleasure."

"And shall you do it?"

"No, by Heaven!" cried the captain, clenching his fists. "I'll see him damned first!"

Mr. Jackson turned and looked uneasily at his angry superior. My sailor said nothing. Dr. Tooker looked

pained and grieved at the captain's rough words, but he could see that it was no time for him to preach a sermon then.

"There, he fires again!" cried I, noticing another puff of smoke.

And this time a ball hurtled over our heads, making a low, singing noise in the air at which I ducked my head. I take no shame for that, for all the others did the same except my sailor. He indeed made no motion. Had he heard such things before, and did he know that sound, I wondered!

"Captain Harks, sir," broke out Mr. Jackson suddenly, with astonishing volubility in one usually so taciturn, "I feel it my duty, sir, to point out to you that she has the range of us; that the next shot, unless we heed her, will be into the ship."

"The lives of helpless men, sir, depend upon your decision," the parson ventured to interpose.

"Let him sink us!" cried Brown furiously.

"Aye, that were better," I seconded, with a selfish thought for nothing but myself.

I should have been glad at that moment for that way out of our danger.

"You're right," said the captain, turning to Mr. Jackson. "There ain't no help for it. For'ard there!" he called out to the men strung out from the forecastle to the waist, staring to windward even as we were.

There was no need to call all hands, for every man and boy on the ship was on deck, and had been through-

out the night, playing their small part in the desperate game at escape the captain and his mates had essayed.

"Get the main yard a-back, Mr. Jackson. 'Tis all that we can do," he added.

"How soon will they be here?" I asked, fighting against that desperate sinking of the heart that well-nigh killed me as I waited for the reply.

"He'll come near to us, choose his own position, heave to with us close under his broadside, an' then send his boat aboard."

"Will a small boat live in such a sea?"

"Why, that is naught for skillful seamen," laughed the captain bitterly. "He'll be aboard us in half an hour or less."

The decision was upon me. I had no time for deliberation. If my plan was to be carried out, I must put it into operation at once. It was well for me from one point of view that no space for reflection was left me. I was face to face with a stark, staring fact. The instant question with me was, should I do it or should I not? Time and my peril were insistent for an answer. I was not at all certain either that my expedient would save me. Yet it was the only thing I could think of, and the probability made me almost sure, at least sure enough to try it. It was well, as I said, that I had no space for reflection, for I might have gone on forever balancing the arguments as I had done pro and con ever since it occurred to me. There is this good about an emergency: it admits of no tri-

fling. It allows no purpose to cool. My mind was made up.

"If you please, Captain Harks, can you spare me Mr. Brown in the cabin for a few moments?"

"For as many as you like," answered the captain promptly. "If I know anything of the tastes of these gentry, I'll be sparin' him for the rest of the v'yage."

"Thank you, sir. Dr. Tooker, will you come below with me? And you, Mr. Brown?"

"I attend you gladly," said the latter promptly.

"Certainly, my child," answered the clergyman.

In a moment we three were alone in the cabin. The two mystified men stood by the table waiting for me to speak. The nearer I approached the crucial moment, the more difficult speech became. My throat suddenly grew dry; my leaden heart raced furiously. It rose from my breast to my throat, but not with lightness, until it seemed to choke me. My lips felt dry and harsh. I opened them and essayed words, but none came.

"Madam," said my sailor with that quick imperiousness that he had used before in grave emergencies, "time presses. If you have a plan, in God's name, voice it. I will do all that I can, whatever it may be, if it holds the faintest promise of success. If it gives any possibilities of relieving you, it shall be done."

"And I promise you my own poor assistance," said Dr. Tooker, who had stood with his hands clasped, his lips moving.

I know that he was praying for us. Indeed, he had naught to fear for himself. I could not speak. I stood

staring at them, dull and stupid like a fool, white-faced, wretched.

"For God's sake, madam!" cried my sailor at last, shaking me somewhat roughly by the arm, though violence toward me, I knew, was never his purpose. "What is it? They will be here in ten minutes—speak, we beg you!"

His touch—precursor of the future perhaps—sent the blood coursing through me. It flamed into my cheeks. I found voice at last.

"Mr. Brown," I whispered faintly, "are you—are you a—married man?"

"What foolish question is here?" he exclaimed impatiently, and disappointed, it would seem, by my absurd irrelevance.

"Answer her," said Dr. Tooker quickly. "Would a woman ask such a question at such a time without a purpose?"

"No, madam," was the reply, "but——"

"Have you pledged your heart or hand to any woman in your own land?" I asked more confidently now.

"Never," was the quick reply.

"Is there no one that you love?"

"No one I love?" he exclaimed, staring at me as if I were distraught. "Really, madam, this passes all bounds. What business—what do you mean?"

I hung my head. I could not sustain his direct and searching gaze.

"I would not jeopard your happiness," I whis-

pered at last, "or do any other woman an injustice, but if you—you could—in short——"

My voice faltered, stopped, died. I hid my scarlet face in my hands.

"By heaven, madam!" said my sailor, slowly stepping nearer to me again and reaching out his hand, "you don't mean——?"

"Don't touch me!" I cried quickly. I could almost have screamed with the nervous tension.

"What is it you would have, then?" he asked almost roughly.

"You said that mercy was shown to— Will you marry me and save me?" I burst out desperately.

"Marry you? But you don't love——"

"Love you! Of course not, nor you me," I cried, finding it easy to speak on that topic. "'Tis not a question of love. 'Tis to save my honor and your life and your dispatches. If Sir Percy Reade finds me married, I shall have lost interest to him. He would not separate man and wife. You will remain on the ship. The marriage means nothing to me but salvation, nothing to you but salvation. It is for our mutual benefit, a bargain, a contract, a business arrangement purely. If you will do it, 'tis a chance. I would not have you murder him on his own deck," I pleaded. "Don't you see how it is, Dr. Tooker?"

I know not what else I said. Words fell from me in broken sentences. I did not dare be silent while the two men stared at me. I felt that if I stopped I should die, but I could not go on speaking forever. He was silent,

he spoke no word. Neither man made answer, in fact. I had offered myself in vain. The shame of it! Even Sir Percy were better than this. I sank down in the chair nearest the cabin table, and again hid in my arms my face, as scarlet as the flag that waved on my enemy's ship. The bitter humiliation of it, the awful horror of it! I had offered myself to this low-born stranger, and he had refused me.

"Women in my station," I gasped out brokenly, "do not love men in yours. Can't you understand? It was only a chance, a desperate chance. If you had accepted it, we could have separated forever as soon as the ruse had served its purpose. But I had no right. Your silence——"

"You misunderstand me," interrupted the voice of my sailor, breaking in upon my own tremulous words. "I will do it."

"But you do not care for——"

"I care for nothing, madam," was the imperious answer delivered in great agitation. Indeed, when I observed him, he seemed almost as much shaken as I by the untoward situation and my amazing proposal. "Not even for you in any way in which a husband should," he went on, "or better——"

What right had he to say that? My heart protested angrily for a space, but I had no time to consider it, for he was still speaking.

"I marry you," he said, resuming his usual composure by a great effort, "although a common sailor, as any gentleman might under such circumstances to

save you, a helpless woman dependent upon him solely, from dishonor and shame. Also in this case you marry me to save my life, my freedom, my dispatches. We are both selfish, you see. We can separate the moment we are on shore, and until death releases you this may all be forgotten."

"But I cannot accept such a sacrifice," I cried, feebly protesting, now that my suggestion had met with acceptance. And indeed he seemed to put me immediately and definitely in the wrong as usual.

"'Tis a greater sacrifice for you, madam, than for me. You may not know it, but you are rarely beautiful with your golden hair and your blue eyes and your cheeks with the color in them as now. Fate hath used you unkindly," he went on in a coldly critical appraisement which eliminated every feeling of satisfaction a maiden might have taken in such a statement from the man she was about to marry. "But the men of America would be glad to woo and win you, and at your cousin's house in the Virginias you would have plenty of suitors. Now you must be forever tied to me."

As he spoke, he looked as cold and as proud as any king I ever saw, and I had seen several.

"I have done with men," I answered with a formality which I flattered myself outmatched his own. "And once I reach my kinsman's home in safety and he receives me, I want nothing but peace and quiet in the world."

"And you shall have it for all me. I will hold you when this marriage is over with the same sanctity and

the same reverence in which the common sailor holds the captain."

"He rules by fear," I said.

"What matter, so the result be attained? But we delay. Dr. Tooker, your offices are needed here."

"I like it not," said the old doctor, who had closely observed us throughout the discussion. "Marriages without love——"

"Here is no question of marriage in your sense, man," said my sailor impatiently. "But quick with book and surplice, an you would have this lady. 'Tis self-interest purely. I scarcely think that even the audacity of a British captain would separate husband and wife on the high seas. She marries me to save her honor from a villain. I marry her to retain my liberty and to do my duty."

"But afterwards?" queried the doctor.

"I shall go out of her life and she shall go out of mine, and if I have a chance to strike hard on our country's enemies, perhaps God may solve the dilemma."

"I would not be released that way, sir," I began lamely, yet with truth.

But he waved me aside.

"Will you do it, doctor? You have scarce five minutes left for it now."

"God help me!" cried the doctor. "What shall I do?"

"Please, please!" I pleaded. "Think of what it would mean to me to be taken on that ship defenseless!"

The doctor hesitated.

"Your answer, sir!" cried Brown, taking him by the shoulder. "They will be alongside in three minutes."

Dr. Tooker fumbled in his pocket and drew forth the little Book of Common Prayer he always carried.

"I will slip my vestments on," he said.

"There is no time for that. It must be done now."

"But witnesses. Some one to give away the bride."

At that moment Joe came into the cabin.

"Call the captain!" cried Brown. "Ask him to come below at once and come you with him."

The boy darted up the stairs, and in a moment the captain, fuming and angry at such presumption on the part of a subordinate, came tumbling down into the cabin followed by the excited boy.

"Hark ye!" he cried to my sailor, "what d'ye mean by summoning the captain below, sir? It's come to a pretty pass that the captain of a ship's receivin' orders from a foremast hand."

"It is at my request, sir, that you have come," I interrupted quickly. "Will you act a father's part toward me?"

"A father's part! Is the girl mad?"

"Nay, but about to be married, and I would have you give me away."

"Married to who?" roared the shipmaster.

"To me, sir," answered Brown.

"A foremast hand! Impossible! Why, I wouldn't let my own daughter, let alone——"

It was his tribute to my station.

"Peace, sir!" said Brown imperiously. How he seemed to dominate the room! "'Tis to save the lady's honor. Yon ship will scarce dare to separate husband and wife. And my dispatches perhaps may win through."

"Curse me!" roared the captain, "if I understand, but——"

"Will you do it?" cried Brown.

"Please, please, captain," I urged, clinging to his arm.

"Heave ahead, parson. It's no business of mine when people marry, and I——"

"Joe here will do for witness!" I cried.

"The brig, what do they?" asked Brown.

"The boat has just left her side. They've taken their time about it, knowin' they had all day at their disposal."

"Thank God for that!" I said. "There's time."

And so we stood up together, my sailor and I, before the parson. I doubt if Dr. Tooker had ever read the marriage service under such conditions, and his voice choked and trembled as he proceeded, even as mine did in the responses. But Brown's voice was as clear and as cold and as steady as it had ever been in his life. He did not look at me or touch me save when it was necessary to do so in the service. The old captain gave me away. I took some comfort as he laid his broad, heavy hand on my shoulder and patted me gently, murmuring:

"Poor girl, poor girl!"

Joe, the cabin boy, stood staring, all eyes, until the service had ended.

Every maid dreams of her wedding, and oftentimes I had pictured mine. Never had it presented itself in this guise. The close cabin of the ship, dark save where the gray light filtered through an open hatch, the old form of the parson faltering through the solemn words, the erect, stalwart, coldly indifferent figure of the man by my side, dressed in his plain sailor's garb—he had not changed his clothes with his promotion—my own self clad in yellow oilskins—I had taken off the sou'-wester, but had not thought it necessary to make any other change in my apparel; indeed, there had been no time.

It was all so strange and so unreal. I could scarce believe it until, drawing from the little finger of his hand a plain band of gold, he placed it on my own left hand, and there it stayed.

"Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder!" the old clergyman's voice faltered through the room.

The bright gold circlet blazed on my finger as it had been a fetter. The benediction was pronounced. We had knelt to receive it. My sailor had made no effort to help me down or up. It was a contract we had entered into in which each party should take his or her own course. We had naught to with each other.

When we arose and it was over, Brown turned away without a glance at me. The captain started some words

of congratulation, but something he must have seen in my white face froze them on his lips. He, too, nodded and followed the other out of the cabin. Joe, boylike, began to sob noisily.

It was Dr. Tooker who gave me my wedding kiss. He came toward me, took my hand in his own, as I stood with bent head before him, stunned, terrified, repentant, now that it was all over. Anything, anything rather than this, I thought, when it was too late. I might better have faced Sir Percy on his own deck than be bound through life to a common sailor for whom I could never care, who cared nothing for me, who would have insulted me if he had. It was Dr. Tooker who drew me to him as a father might, and kissed me and patted me upon the shoulder, and it was upon his worn coat that I sobbed out my bride's tears on this, my wedding morning.

As we stood there together, he saying gentle things —he had the tact not to allude to the ceremony we had just gone through or to the new relationship into which I had entered with this overmastering stranger—we heard a sharp voice outside cry:

"Way enough. Oars. In bows."

The words were followed by the rattling of oars in rowlocks, and then a smart bump as a small boat struck the side of the ship.

"You would best go to your cabin, my dear," whispered the doctor. "They may not have seen you."

I shook my head. I knew that were not possible. Nevertheless, I obeyed his injunction.

We knelt to receive the benediction

"Wait there," he said, "until I come to you. I have yet something to do."

I slipped off the oilskins and went into the cabin and sat down on the berth in a state of numb torpor. I sat with my hands closing over my breast as if to ward off something—I knew not what—and waited. Of all the dreary, horrible tasks that can be set to humanity, it is to wait in ignorance for what is coming, to expect a blow and know not when it will fall. We women have to do so much waiting, they say. I had done but little of it before, but now my hour was come. I rocked to and fro in the steady ship in voiceless agony.

A wife, and yet no wife, and never to be a wife! All that life holds in those words for womankind shut out from me forever. My soul turned sick and faint at the thought. I leaned my head against the cabin bulkhead and wished that the ship would sink beneath me; that I might die; that anything might happen. I loathed the thought of men, Sir Percy, my sailor, my husband —good God, my husband!

A tap on the door smote me like a blow. The next moment Dr. Tooker's voice reassured me. He opened it without further ceremony, and handed me a folded paper.

"What is this?" I forced my white lips to ask.

"Read it," said the old man. "Your wedding certificate."

The letters of the paper swam before my eyes. It was a brief document, but I could make nothing of it.

"I have made it out in due form," said the old man.

"It hath been witnessed by the captain. I took it to him. See, there Joe hath made his mark. 'Twill be useful that you keep it to show that you are in deed and truth a wedded wife. And may God have mercy on you!" added the old man as he closed the door.

I thrust the paper into my bosom, where it lay against the others that had been given me.

"A wedded wife!" and "May God have mercy upon you!"

That had been the doctor's prayer, the prayer that the judge utters when he hath condemned the wretched criminal to death. Would God that death had stared me in the face instead of this. He had had welcome from me that nothing else would have won.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MY WEDDING DAY—THE FORENOON

I WAS not allowed many moments' respite before another knock on the door startled me into action. This time it was Mr. Jackson who had been sent below to fetch me. I wondered why my—the man I had married had not come, but I gave no utterance to my thought. I would have refused the summons—indeed, my first thought had been to lock myself in my cabin and defy my pursuers—but common sense, of which I had a little left, at once convinced me of the absurdity and futility of that course. They would break the door down in a minute. I had nothing to gain by resistance. On the contrary, my safety depended upon finesse rather than force. So I followed the burly mate up the ladder, my heart thumping furiously, my knees trembling beneath me, but putting as bold a face as I could muster on the situation.

The ship lay to, slowly rocking on the long white swells which had succeeded the wilder turmoil of the storm. Her maintop sail was flat a-back, and her motion through the water was checked. So near that it was easy to recognize figures upon her deck lay the brig to windward. Sir Percy—I could never mistake

him; if the eyes of love are keen, they are sometimes overmatched by the eyes of hate and loathing—stood on the rail of the *Porcupine* by the mizzen rigging staring down at us. As I appeared, he took off his hat with a great flourish, in which I could read derision, triumph, everything but respect.

The rain had ceased as suddenly as it began, and through a break in the clouds to the eastward a bar of sunlight fell, not enough for a glorious morning, just sufficient to bring out the wet outlines of the sodden ships on the still, gray sea. Mr. Jackson had told me I would not need the oilskins, and I had not resumed them as I passed through the cabin.

Captain Harks, looking as black as death, stood aft. By his side stood Parson Tooker. Forward around the mainmast were grouped some of the stoutest men in the ship, bright, alert, capable young fellows, cheery seamen whom I had observed jauntily going about their duties during the short period I had been on the *Potomac*. Their faces were different now. Hatred, despair, agony were reflected upon their countenances as they stood, some with clenched hands, others with their fingers thrust into the bosoms of their shirts, and some fingering nervously at the sheath knives they wore at their belts. One, a mere boy, was choking with sobs. He leaned his head on his arms, and those on the fife rail, in spite of the pity of his mates and the contempt of the handful of burly seamen, all heavily armed with cutlass and pistol, who guarded them. The rest of the crew were forward, a sullen, black-browed group staring aft.

Scattered here and there about the deck in places whence they could easily be assembled in one group, and where they could command the movements of the ship's crew should any overt act be attempted, were other British seamen, all armed like those guarding the men at the mast. The precaution was hardly necessary, for a glance at the brig, which was now within point-blank range, showed a line of open ports from each of which protruded the black muzzle of a long gun. She could have sunk us in five minutes had she opened fire.

Forward of the mizzen mast and midway the quarterdeck stood a young officer in the brilliant blue-and-white uniform of the British Navy. It was a costume I well knew. I had danced with many a wearer of that garb in the days which now seemed so far back from me, although but so short a space had passed since my father's death, and but three days since my abduction. Before him stood Brown. I could not yet bring myself to call him, even in my thoughts, my husband, although that he occupied that relationship to me was never out of my mind a minute. Some sort of interrogation, or question and answer, had been passed when I arrived. Brown saw me first. His involuntary start in my direction attracted the attention of the lieutenant, for he turned and regarded me for a moment. Off came his hat. He bowed low before me.

"Have I the honor of addressing Mistress Caroline Martindale?" he asked respectfully enough.

"You have not, sir," I answered, striving to control the tremulousness in my voice.

But with the answer my courage came back. The game had begun, the cards had been dealt, and I was resolved to play it boldly to the end.

The young lieutenant appeared vastly surprised. He turned to the angry captain close at hand.

"How's this?" he cried in a very different tone from that he had used in addressing me. "Have you other women aboard, sir?"

"No," roared Captain Harks.

"Our information was precise," he continued, turning back to me with a thoughtful look. "There is no doubt that Mistress Martindale boarded this ship. She did not land before your departure, and unless you have transshipped her at sea to some other vessel, she must be still aboard."

"Figure it out for yourself," growled the captain insolently. "You're in command, I take it."

"Madam," said the lieutenant, bowing to me again in, it must be conceded, a very embarrassed way, "they say that all's fair in love or war."

"But this is neither, sir," I interrupted. "Here is no question of love, and as you are at peace with the United States, there is no question of war."

"Be that as it may," he replied, waving my quip aside, "are you sure, forgive me the doubt, that you are not Mistress Caroline Martindale?"

"I am sure of it."

The nonplussed lieutenant looked helplessly about him. His next glance fell upon Dr. Tooker.

"I have to make certain," he said, as if in justifica-

tion of his persistent suspicion. "Sir, you are a clergyman. Is the name of this lady, Caroline Martindale?"

"Not exactly, sir," faltered the doctor. "Not now, that is."

"Was it ever?"

The poor clergyman turned scarlet at the disclosure he had inadvertently made. The officer stared puzzled, turning to me again.

"Here is some mystery, madam. If you are not now, were you ever Caroline Martindale?"

I could not lie to him. It would have been useless anyway, had I been willing to do so.

"I was, sir."

"But what are you now, may I ask?"

"My wife, sir," broke in Brown at this juncture.

"Your wife! Oh, come!" laughed the lieutenant, insolently surveying my sailor. "Your pardon, madam, 'tis a trick, an evasion surely. Such as you do not mate with foremast hands."

"Death, sir!" cried Brown, springing forward.

"Softly, my man," answered the lieutenant, moving back a step quickly. "Men," he called.

Two or three seamen sprang to his side, handling their pistols. It was well that they were by, for I believe Brown would have killed him. As for me, my pale face tingled with color, I am sure. So that was the way the world would look at it, such as I and a common sailor! But I had no time to dwell on that.

"Sir," said I, "your doubts do you no honor, for the statement is true. I am this man's wedded wife."

"Impossible!"

"I add my testimony to the lady's, sir," interposed Dr. Tooker with great dignity, "for I married them."

"I gave the bride away," growled the captain, "and there was another witness to the service, Joe, the cabin boy here."

"Aye, aye, sir, I seed it done," cried the young fellow importantly, evidently glad to be mixed up in such a dramatic affair.

"When was it performed?" asked the officer, his surprise and annoyance on the increase.

"What matters that?" said Brown impatiently.

"Peace, you swab," answered the disgusted lieutenant, glad of a chance to vent his annoyance on some one, "I am dealing with your betters."

"Well, then, speak to me," I cried, confronting him boldly. I was beginning to get angry and forgetting everything but the insolence of this man. "What matters it to you when it was performed? 'Tis a fact and that suffices. There stands my husband. I am his wife."

The lieutenant looked at me long and earnestly. He was clearly puzzled. He knew not what to say.

"This puts a different face upon the matter," he said at last. "I had instructions to bring you, a British subject, aboard yonder brig, but since you are a married woman, 'fore God, I know not what to do."

"There's naught to do," said I, "but go and leave me to my husband."

"Even your high-handed way of bringin' to peaceful traders an' takin' from them as good American citi-

zens as was ever born, like these men yonder, 'll stop, I think, at kidnappin' the wives of my officers," said Captain Harks.

"The situation is unusual," said the lieutenant hesitatingly. "I am sure we have no wish to separate husband and wife. Madam, I am compelled to believe you in the presence of such testimony, but I shall refer the matter to Sir Percy Reade, my captain."

My heart sank at that, but there was nothing more to be done.

"I have still another quest, master skipper," said the lieutenant, turning away from me to the captain. "I am informed that it is possible you have on board a man who is in possession of certain papers stolen from their rightful owners. Him I am directed to apprehend."

"The ship's yours," said the captain roughly. "You need no advice from me as to how to go about your hellish task."

"I want information, though," thundered the lieutenant, glad to be dealing with a man at last instead of a more or less helpless woman. "And I mean to have it. Have you such a man?"

"Find out for yourself," roared the captain, just as loudly as the other had spoken.

"I mean to. As for you, my man," he turned toward Brown again. I had withdrawn from the immediate vicinity of the group, but still remained on deck where I could see and hear everything that transpired. "As for you, my man, I'd like to know how you came to be

second mate of this ship. The papers show that one Silas Eccles is second mate, and this lady and you declare your name to be William Brown."

Brown was so angry that he could not speak. He actually turned his back on the lieutenant. It was Mr. Jackson, the coolest head on the ship apparently, who came to the rescue.

"The second mate was killed by an accident, fell from the futtock shrouds an' died. Captain Harks promoted this man from the fo'c's'l."

"Indeed," said the officer, lifting his head from a more thorough examination of the ship's papers, "I see that your name does not appear in the original articles. You signed on at the last minute at Portsmouth. Wait a bit. Where's that description?"

He fetched out another paper from his pocket and read aloud, looking carefully at Brown as he did so.

"Tall, well knit, muscular, dark hair, eyes black, dark complexion, dressed as an ordinary seaman, looks above his station. My man," he said, putting the paper back in his pocket, "you are he. I'll trouble you for those papers."

Brown dragged out a handful of papers from his shirt—I recognized them as the originals of the papers I had—and fairly threw them to the deck at the feet of the lieutenant.

"There they are," he said, "and much good may they do you."

The lieutenant stopped, bent forward, and looked at him viciously. Indeed his conduct and his bearing had

been insolent enough to provoke a saint, and the British officer was not that.

"Pick them up," he commanded.

"I'll see you damned first," answered the other, all his pride in arms.

Quick as a flash the officer whipped out his pistol, cocked it, and with it covered my sailor.

"If you don't pick them up before I count five, I'll kill you where I stand. One-Two-Three," he began.

There was murder in his eyes. My husband's life hung in the balance. I screamed and darted forward.

"I'll pick them up," I cried, interposing between the two men and bending toward the papers.

"By no means, madam," said the officer, dropping his pistol and smiling. "One of the men here shall hand them to me in place of the unmannerly cur you have chosen to wed. But he must go with me."

"Am I pressed?" asked Brown haughtily.

He had not moved a muscle while the pistol was pointed at him, nor when I interfered to save him from certain death. Why I did it, I know not. And in the end it turned out rather well, for it indicated to the officer at least that the marriage was a genuine one and that I was perhaps attached to the man whom at that moment I fairly hated. And yet there was something splendid, if very foolish, in the way he defied men who had him so completely in their power.

"No," said the officer; "you are apprehended by order of the king."

"I am not to go as a seaman then?"

"As a prisoner."

"Very well, I am ready."

"You will go without force?"

"Certainly. I give you my word of honor."

"Your word of honor!" laughed the lieutenant. "Since when have foremast Jacks had any honor?"

"Not since quarterdeck had descended to the level of pimp and panderer," was the caustic reply.

"Great God!" roared the officer, the veins starting out in his head. "This to me?"

"Aye, you would have taken this lady for your degraded captain's——"

"I beg you to forgive my poor husband," said I, laying my hand upon the officer's arm. "'Tis his grief at leaving me that unmans him."

"'Fore God, he's not going to leave you, madam," answered the officer, roughly enough.

"What mean you?" I asked, my heart sinking again.

"This man is arrested as a common thief, and——"

I could hear the sharp intake of my husband's breath at this fearful charge, I could see his sudden movement forward.

"How dare you bring such an accusation?" I cried, my face aflame. I must carry out my part as wife I felt, and I was conscious of a growing indignation as well. I could marry a sailor in an emergency, but never a felon. "What hath he stolen?"

"Papers from the English Government."

"Oh, the papers," said I, laughing contemptuously. "Is that all?"

"That is all, madam."

"Well, you have them now. Let him go therefore."

"Nay, he must be taken back to England."

"But he is my husband," I urged. "Surely, sir, you would not separate husband and wife."

"I do not mean to."

"What!" I exclaimed.

"You go with him."

"Oh, sir," I began, clasping my hands.

"'Tis useless to say another word, madam," was the curt return. "My mind is made up. Into the boat, all of you," he said to the sailors at the mast.

"May we not go and fetch our bags, sir?" asked one of the American seamen thus addressed.

"Some of you go and break out the belongings of the rest of them," said the lieutenant to the crew forward, "and be quick about it. Your things, madam."

"Am I to be kept on that ship?"

"I fear so. At least until we get to the Bermudas or can transship you to England."

"They are in a box in my cabin."

"Yours?" to Mr. Brown.

"They are in a box in mine."

"Which are the cabins?" asked the lieutenant.

I told him.

"Four of you men go below and bring on deck the boxes and whatever gear you find there," said the lieutenant shortly to his own party.

And in a moment or two our poor belongings were deposited on the deck at our feet side by side. Some of

their shipmates assisted the men who had been detailed to get the sailors' bags and chests up and all was soon ready. The things were hastily stowed aboard the roomy cutter which swung alongside at the gangway.

The men, some eight in number, were sent down into it and distributed in the fore sheets and aft and then the officer motioned to me.

"I protest against this damnable outrage," cried Captain Harks, coming forward, "this seizure of a helpless feemale from the peaceable ship of a friendly nation."

"Do you feel much friendship for us, captain?"

"No, by God, I don't!" roared the captain. "But we're outwardly at peace at least an' I protest against it."

"Protest and be damned, sir," returned the lieutenant suavely. "Into the boat, all of you."

"Good-by, captain," I cried, "you have done well by me. 'Tis not your fault. Good-by, Mr. Jackson," I continued. "Good-by, Dr. Tooker."

The old man took me in his arms.

"My child, my child, may God protect you!"

Brown wrung the hands of the three men, turned away, preceded me down the battens, and helped me gently into the stern sheets of the cutter.

The boat was shoved off, the oars were broken out and away we went toward the little brig. My ruse had failed then, yet not altogether. The man who sat by my side a prisoner was still a safeguard. Surely Sir Percy Reade would offer no violence to a married woman.

I tried to buoy myself up with that thought, but to little avail, and I was sadder and more helpless and more wretchedly depressed than at any moment in my life when I set foot on the little brig to find myself confronted by the man I hated above everything on earth or sea and who had me absolutely in his power at last.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MY WEDDING DAY—THE AFTERNOON

"MISTRESS MARTINDALE," said Sir Percy, smiling evilly at me, while he motioned me aft on the quarterdeck, "well met. I am glad to welcome you to my ship."

"Sir," I replied, "you are mistaken. I am no longer Mistress Martindale."

He laughed.

"Hath the sea air got into your brain, madam?"

"Not so," was my answer, "but I am now a married woman."

"A married woman!" roared the baronet. "'Fore God, madam, 'tis impossible! Whose wife are you?"

"Mine," said Brown, who had gained the deck and followed us aft and now stood a little apart from the rest of the men whom the lieutenant had pressed from the ship who remained by the gangway, while the lieutenant gave some directions to his boat crew.

"And who are you, sir?"

"My name is William Brown. I was acting as second mate of yonder ship when your men——"

"A little more respect in your voice and manner, sir, as due your superiors," roared the captain.

"You're not my superior in any way, and——"

"Am I not? Bos'n's mate," cried Sir Percy, "trice this man up and give him a round dozen or two."

"But he is my husband," I cried.

"S'death, madam. Do you expect me to believe such a cock-and-bull story as that?"

"'Tis the truth, I swear it, so help me God!"

"What is the meaning of this, Buffington?" cried the captain, turning toward his lieutenant.

He had been so taken up with welcoming me that he had not time to hear the man's report.

"There's a clergyman, a passenger on yon ship," returned the lieutenant, "who swears he married this sailor and this lady. The captain and the cabin boy both corroborated his statement. They were witnesses to the ceremony."

"Here," said I, drawing the paper from the bosom of my dress, "is our marriage certificate duly signed and witnessed."

Sir Percy took it from me and glanced over it, grinding his teeth with rage as he did so. Before I could prevent him, he tore it into a thousand bits and threw it into the sea.

"You can easily tear up such a paper," said I proudly, "but you cannot thereby alter the fact."

"That paper was dated this morning," said Sir Percy. "The ceremony has just been performed, I take it."

"You are right, sir."

"Your passion for this gentleman is a sudden one."

"But none the less convincing on that account."

"And do you love him?"

"I know not why I should submit to such questioning as to my heart, sir. The fact that I married him sufficeth for answer."

"By heaven, it does," thundered the captain. "I see it all now. You married him thinking to escape falling in my hands, did you? You stooped to this foremast hand for that?"

"I would stoop lower than that," I cried in reply, "if it were a question of stooping, and in any event, I would rather be the wife of an honest man than—than be associated in any way with you."

"'Fore God, madam, you shall have a chance to try." He laughed sardonically. "Now, Buffington, your report, sir; what of the ship?"

"I have brought off eight likely looking lads, sir," answered Buffington. "They all claim to be American, but they are plainly English."

He laughed knowingly as he spoke.

"Trust you to know an Englishman," returned the captain, joining in the other's mirth.

"Thank you, sir. They'll fill up the complement and give us a handy working crew."

"You've done well," said the captain. "My lads"—he stepped closer to the Americans and thrust his head out threateningly. Every one of them, except the boy who had cried, looked as if they wanted to choke him and would have liked nothing better than to kill him—"you're to turn to as honest British seamen on this ship and do your full duty, and no skulking."

"But we're all American citizens, sir," cried the boldest looking of them.

"Belay that. There are no American citizens on his Majesty's brig-of-war *Porcupine*. I'll have your names put on the muster roll and there you are. Perhaps you don't know what discipline is aboard one of his Majesty's ships, and it'll be well for you if you learn it by observation rather than experience. That will do. Go forward. The bo's'n will show you your quarters and serve out hammocks and the first lieutenant will give you your watches. Wait," said Sir Percy, pointing to Brown, "I'll keep you further."

The other men went forward. Then Sir Percy turned to his lieutenant again.

"And how about those papers, Buffington; were they there?"

"Here they are, sir," said Buffington, tendering them.

"Well done! Who had them? Did you get the man?"

"I did, sir. This is he."

"Oh, he wasn't pressed then?"

"No, sir, I couldn't make him out a British subject, but I brought him along as a prisoner and, as it would be improper to separate husband and wife," continued Buffington, laughing again, "I brought the lady along, too."

"You did well," roared Sir Percy. "'Tis lucky for my plans that her husband proved to be the bearer of the dispatches, for I scarcely think it would be proper even for one of his Majesty's ships to take therefrom

a peaceful woman. 'Twould look bad in the dispatches, eh, Buffington?"

"Undoubtedly, sir, but so soon as the lady avowed herself this man's wife, I deemed it right to bring her as I took him."

"You did well, exceedingly well," returned the captain genially. "I shall make your conduct known to the First Lord of the Admiralty, who happens to be a kinsman of mine."

"Am I to be treated as a prisoner of war, or pressed as a seaman aboard this ship?" asked Brown, who had remained silent during this long interview, silent under what strain perhaps no one could guess so well as I, for the sweat fairly beaded the poor man's forehead.

He looked haggard and worn. I doubt not that he was repenting the situation in which he found himself and that it would have been a pleasure, as it would have been a possibility, for him to have killed the captain where he stood. An easy, if costly solution, that. But I had expressed myself definitely on that point and perhaps he realized that he was my only protection and that if he attacked Sir Percy and failed by any chance he would surely be shot or hanged and I would be left alone with this sea wolf.

"You are to be considered, sir," answered Sir Percy, with a malicious, vicious gleam in his eyes that portended some evil—I did not know what—"as the husband of this lady. You will both occupy a spare stateroom in my own cabin. We are bound for the West Indies and I shall be happy to consider you as my

guests to the end of the cruise unless I can transship you to some other man-of-war bound home. By heaven!" he roared, "'tis long since there's been any billing and cooing on any of his Majesty's ships that I have had the honor to command, and I shall enjoy to see you play at love making. Fore God, 'twill be hard for an impressionable old bachelor like myself to witness, but needs must. Madam has married; I recognize the marriage."

I could have killed Sir Percy then with my naked hands had I possessed the strength. What a fool I had been. Once I had had him under the muzzle of my weapon and I had shot a noble horse instead. Once he had died under the hands of my husband, but I had called him away and saved this man's life. Assuredly Sir Percy had not loved me, did not love me even with the base, ignoble passion which went by that name in his rotten heart. What he wanted was revenge. I had mocked him, insulted him, derided him, and had heaped contempt upon him. I learned afterwards that he had bragged to his officers what an easy conquest he would have once he got me on the ship, and now he was publicly flaunted. They say hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, but it appeared that a man scorned is her fit mate. All he wanted now was revenge upon me. He wanted to turn this loveless, hateful marriage into which he saw perfectly into a reality.

I prayed that God might strike Sir Percy dead or me—I cared not which. I stared at him, ghastly, deathly faint, and sick. I know not what I might have said, but

it was my husband who came to the rescue. He stepped forward and took me by the hand. Had I been mistress of myself, I might have drawn it away—indeed, I believe I did make a faint effort in that direction—but he held me with too firm a grasp. And somehow there was reassurance in that strong, resolute hand which met my palm.

"Sir," said he gravely and with dignity, "we thank you for your consideration. Marriages are made in heaven, 'tis said, and ours I trust will prove not to gainsay the proverb. As for your desire to feast yourself upon our endearments, I trust, that though but a common sailor, I may learn from association in your cabin with you, sir, how to demean myself toward you and all other people, but especially toward this my wife, as becomes a gentleman."

"Fine words!" sneered Sir Percy. "We shall see."

During this conversation our luggage had been brought aboard.

"Mr. Flitcroft," said the captain, turning toward the first lieutenant, "do you send the luggage of this lady and her—man below into my cabin. There's a spare stateroom there on the starboard side. Bestow it there."

"Very good, sir," said the first lieutenant, a grizzled, unimpressionable, veteran seaman of perhaps fifty years who had come to the quarterdeck through the hawse hole and had stuck at a lieutenancy as I afterwards learned.

"And how about the other ship, sir?" asked Mr. Buffington.

"I'm going aboard of her for a few moments myself," returned Sir Percy. "Call away the gig."

In a short time Sir Percy took his seat in the stern sheets of his private boat and was rowed to the *Potomac*. No one had noticed us after the captain's final remark, which indeed had scarcely been audible beyond the quarterdeck, for at his request we had drawn aft to the break of the poop while he spoke with us. The brig had a high poop and a topgallant forecastle. It was not flush decked like the *Potomac*. The fact that our baggage had been sent into his cabin and that Brown had not been sent forward with the rest of the seamen was indication of our quality, and no one made the least objection when, at his suggestion, I preceded my husband up the ladder to the poop deck, whence we could get a clearer sight of the *Potomac* than we could on the quarterdeck where the high bulwarks hid the view.

By the time we got there the gig was alongside the ship and we could see Sir Percy scrambling up the battens. His business aboard her was brief and presently he descended and the gig pulled away for the brig. Neither of us had said anything meanwhile.

"Madam," said my husband at last, "believe me you have my deepest sympathy. I pity you from the bottom of my heart."

"Between you and him," I said bitterly—and unkindly it must have sounded, but I was afraid of him now—"I shall go mad."

"Nay," he said with unwonted gentleness—I had not known he could use the mood—"my poor child, you

have naught to fear from me, but outwardly we must carry out the deception. In the presence of the others, you are my wife."

"Yes," I whispered, "but not in the sight of God."

"True, nor in my sight either."

"I hate you!" I said. "I hate all mankind. Men have used me so ill."

"I understand. I don't blame you," he went on soothingly. "Don't give way now. You have borne up so bravely; you have done so well. Things might be worse, you know. You might be here alone."

"But you," I cried.

"I am here to protect your honor, your innocence, with my life."

There was gentleness, compassion, even tenderness in his voice. I stole a look at him. He was not looking at me, but staring toward the ship. I felt reassured.

"I am a wretched, ungrateful girl," I continued. "I am not myself. I don't know what I say."

"I understand," he said again. "All you have to do is to pretend that we are husband and wife when anybody is looking."

"But," I cried, the words wrung from me, "that cabin——"

"You shall be as safe there as if it were a shrine."

I drew a long breath, fighting to keep back the tears. There was strange relief in what he said. For a common man he was behaving nobly, strangely like a gentleman. Was Sir Percy a gentleman, I wondered dumbly? Certainly, in degree, but in heart he was a craven hound.

He came back up the side of the brig, looking black enough. He saw us standing on the poop and made his way directly toward us.

"You verified the truth of our statements, I suppose?" asked my husband coolly, as the baronet stopped before us.

"I did, damn you! I mean, bless you, my children."

"You are satisfied that we are married?"

"I am satisfied that you went through a ceremony."

"That is all that's necessary then."

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," said the captain bitterly, turning away.

He stepped up on the low rail of the poop deck, balancing himself by one of the backstays, hollowed his hand and hailed:

"*Potomac* there!"

"What is it?" growled the voice of Captain Harks.

I could see him plainly, and Mr. Jackson, and old Dr. Tooker by his side.

"You can get under way now and resume your course," answered Sir Percy.

"Damn you, damn you!" roared Captain Harks, shaking his fist at the brig. "I hope to God you sink before you reach another port."

"Hark ye, master skipper," roared Sir Percy in return, "keep a civil tongue in your head and get under way without more ado or I'll put a broadside in you."

Captain Harks—I could see him empurpling and grinding his teeth—turned away without a response. I could hear his deep voice bellowing:

"Swing the mainyard!"

That was all. The *Potomac's* yards were swung, her sails filled and she glided slowly away. She had been a haven to me for a short space. Once I thought she would afford me an escape. She was inextricably woven with my life. Beneath her flag and on her decks I had been made a wife. Standing on that British brig, she represented home to me. I looked after her with streaming eyes, choking back a sob. Dr. Tooker climbed up on the rail, one of the seamen held him there. I could see him making the sign of the cross in my direction. It might have been thought papistical by some, but there was comfort in it for me.

By the captain's directions Mr. Flitcroft got the brig under way as well. Sir Percy had removed himself from our vicinity and was standing at the break of the poop, looking down in a moody, bitter way upon his own crowded decks, so much smaller and so much more occupied than those of the *Potomac*. And we were alone again.

"I have nobody now but you," I said. "Oh, if you fail me, I shall die by my own hand."

"Madam, I will not fail you," he answered simply.

And as I looked into his eyes, I knew that his words were true.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MY WEDDING DAY—THE NIGHT

I PASSED the larger part of that day in my cabin, in the occupancy of which I was left undisturbed by my husband. What my thoughts and feelings were can be imagined. We dined and supped with the captain. Such meals as those I never wish to partake of again. Sir Percy's manner had changed since his violent outbreak of the morning and he was outwardly polite, even hospitable, to me, while he treated Brown with a silent contempt which would have driven me mad. Indeed, I wondered how the man bore it. I realized after a while that he had schooled himself to take no offense at anything the baronet might say or do to him personally. He was evidently resolved not to play into Sir Percy's hand, and as he was purposely omitted from the conversation, he did not try to break in upon it.

The conversation was largely a monologue by the host, with just such answers as bare civility demanded from me. Although his words were civil enough outwardly, everyone was a veiled insult, which culminated in his drinking the health of the newly wedded pair and wishing them all the happiness of life in their new relationship. In this toast he included my husband,

who sat opposite him, as well as me by his side. Brown drank it as coolly and with as matter-of-fact an air and bowed as if it were the acknowledgment of a mere every-day compliment in a conventional situation; but I, who had learned something of his moods, could see that the glass trembled in his fingers and I knew that he longed to throw it in the other man's face. For a space I wished that he would do it.

He realized, and presently I realized it too, that such a movement would be fatal to me, for Sir Percy, it seemed to me from the remarks he made, bade fair to repent of his complaisance and had begun to prefer something else to what he believed would be his vengeance. Even his simulation of high spirits failed as the meal progressed and I saw his eye dwell upon Brown in periods of silence with a baneful significance. Perhaps, I thought, the wretch does love me after all, and the thought drove me to action.

I leaned across the table in full view of the captain and laid my hand upon the brown and sinewy one of my sailor.

"Will, dear," I began, forcing myself to the act, and really it was not so hard after all, "I am tired of the stuffy cabin; will you take me out on deck?"

"Will, dear!" growled the captain, draining his glass. "Allow me that privilege, Mrs."—he bowed significantly—"Brown," he said.

What a hateful name it was from his lips, but what did the name matter anyway! It was the fact, and not the name, that broke my heart.

"With your permission, sir," returned my husband, as cool as you please, "'tis my privilege to escort my wife."

"You have no privileges on this ship, sir," thundered Sir Percy, "and the sooner you know it the better."

"Have I not?" began the other, starting to his feet, his dark face red with anger and defiance.

But I interposed. The outbreak had come quicker than I expected and 'twas I that must restore the situation.

"Sir Percy Reade, hear me! Do you believe that I am a woman of my word?"

"Why, madam, I——"

"Do you believe it?" I insisted.

"I have never known you to break it, at any rate," was the grudging admission.

"You knew my father, did he break his to any man or woman?"

"Rumor saith not, madam."

"Well, then, hear me! If you lay the weight of your hand upon my husband"—I stepped to his side and slipped my arm in his—"if you treat him any other than as becomes a gentleman——"

"Why, good Lord, he's a foremast hand!"

"He's my husband. If he be all that you say, the more reason for you to give him a lesson in manners."

"Nay, Caroline," said my sailor, and in spite of myself I started to hear my name fall so glibly from his lips, "let him do as he likes with me."

"Not so," I replied. "Sir Percy Reade, I swear to

you, I swear before God, that if this man comes to any harm from you, I will kill myself instantly."

"You wouldn't dare," he began.

"And why not? And I'll say more. If I have a weapon and can compass it before I die, I'll kill you."

"But, Mistress Caroline," he protested, "are——"

"Mrs. Brown, sir," thundered my husband, smiting the table with his fist until the china danced.

The captain bit his lip.

"By God, you vixen, I believe you'd do it," he murmured.

"You may well believe it," I answered.

"But you can't love this man. 'Tis impossible!"

"He is my husband," I said proudly, "and I intend to be to him all that a wife should."

"See here," said the baronet bluntly, "I've been a cursed fool. I——"

"Have a care, Sir Percy," I broke out as he faltered over his words, "that you say nothing to me that an honest woman who means to be an honest wife may not hear."

"Where did you meet this man?" he asked.

"I will not tell you," said I. "'Tis no concern of yours."

"I have no objection to telling Sir Percy," said Brown, to my great surprise. "You met me first of all at the Blue Anchor Inn at Portsmouth. I had the pleasure of shaking——"

"Not my hand," cried the baronet. "I never shook hands with such as you, I swear."

"Your neck, sir," answered Brown.

Sir Percy started to his feet. The remark at once enlightened him, and his knowledge did not tend to soothe him either.

"So it was you, was it?"

He clenched his fists.

"For two cents I'd do it again," returned Brown, "right here and now."

Again it was I who interposed. These men apparently hated each other with a deeper hatred than that which naturally lay between different countries and different ranks in life. I did not understand exactly why, although I might if I had had space to think clearly.

"Stay, Sir Percy, you recall that episode, do you?"

"Before God, I do, madam. I remember it to his hurt, as he shall see."

"Well, then, you also remember that you would have died under his hand had I not interfered."

"That is true? What then?"

"I saved your life then. Give me his now, and we will cry quits."

Sir Percy was something of a sportsman.

"Done!" he said, smiling hatefully, "and I give him to you and you to him, but now that we are quits we begin a new score, and, by Heaven! let him look to it. I'll show him no mercy."

"And forget not," cried I, shaking my finger in his face, "that his death warrant and mine run side by side. Now," I turned to my husband again, "will you take me on deck?"

We chose the lee side of the poop deck as being unoccupied. The officers left us severely to ourselves, and we walked up and down for the most part silent, now and then exchanging a word or two. His hand steadied me as I walked, and I no longer shrank from his touch.

"That was a bold game you played in the cabin," he said, after one of the intervals of silence.

"Remember it was but a game."

"I know, I know."

"That is, all but my threat."

"You would not kill yourself for me, madam?" he asked in surprise.

"For you, no," I answered, "but with you dead I should be in his hands. You are my sole protection; I could not let him do you hurt, you see."

"I thought as much," he replied, and I am sure I detected a trace of bitterness in his voice.

What right had he to resent my frank statement? He was doing much for me, but I was doing something for him. There were his precious dispatches in my bodice. And yet—it was foolishness, pity perhaps, I know not. I looked up at him again after a little space.

"I would not have you suffer on your own account," I said. "You have done so much for me, and——"

"Nay, nay, madam," he interposed, "the marriage between us is purely a matter of interest. Let us obtrude no sentiment whatever in it. I am useful to you, and you are useful to me. The balance is struck. Let us keep to our bargain."

"Forgive me!" said I. "I am glad that you put it that way."

Nevertheless, this isn't saying that I knew there was no balance between us; that he risked and had risked infinitely more for me than I for him. But I was a woman, and accustomed to service. I did not, therefore, feel it unmeet that he should do so.

By and by he began to talk to me, but not about our troubles; in fact, he seemed deliberately to avoid them. And he talked to me about the sea upon which he had been bred, and which he loved. The clouds had gone long since. It was a mild and brilliant night. The wind was fair and gentle; there was a new moon and the water was bathed in silver in its track. He told me strange tales of far lands. Although I had listened to him perfunctorily at first, in a short time I became interested, even amused, and once or twice I laughed. The time passed unheeded. The last half hour I had sat upon the carriage of a light cannon mounted upon the poop, and he had stood near me. He was exerting himself evidently to distract me and to please me, and certainly he succeeded.

I had no idea it was so late until the bell forward struck four. Then a smart little midshipman came up to us and touched his cap.

"The captain's compliments to Mrs. Brown, and he'd like to see her and her husband in the cabin."

The alert voice of the bright little youngster shattered all my dreams, and woke me to the stern and terrible realities of the situation. My face must have

gone white in the moonlight, or the look of pain and anxiety in it must have appealed to my companion.

"Trust me," he whispered, as he assisted me to my feet.

He did not relinquish my hand, and thus—the companion ladder being a broad one—we descended to the quarterdeck and entered the cabin. Sir Percy had been drinking heavily, and was in an ugly mood.

"Hand in hand like two children," he sneered as we came in view.

For answer my husband slipped his arm about my waist.

"Do you like this better, Sir Percy?" he asked.

"Vastly better," growled the baronet. "I don't know." He hung in the wind, and finally smashed his glass down on the table. "Get you to bed!" he roared viciously. "'Tis four bells. Lights are out on the brig save by my permission. Yon's your cabin."

"Good night," I said, striving desperately for calm. I turned to my husband, who had released me at my word and extended my hand. "Come," said I.

And together we entered the little cabin that had been allotted to us, and closed the door. With a roar like a bull, Sir Percy jumped to his feet, sprang to the door and hammered on it with his fist.

"Come out of that, curse you!" he roared hoarsely. "Come out of that, you dog!"

My husband had shot the bolt of the door. I clung to him in frantic terror while the baronet's blows rained on the stout door.

Then a smart little midshipman came up to us and touched his cap

"Sir Percy," I cried, as he continued to swear and curse upon the other side and threaten to have the door forced, "if you force that door, you'll find me a dead woman!"

"And if she doesn't do it, I will with my own hands!" cried Brown.

There was that in the ring of both our voices which would have carried conviction to a dead man. Sir Percy fell silent. We could hear him outside breathing hard. Finally he broke into a peal of horrible laughter.

"I wish you joy," he said, "on your wedding night."

The partition that divided the stateroom from the main cabin was open in a sort of grating above our heads to let in the air, and some light irradiated the room to some degree from the great lamp in the outer cabin, which was not turned off. We stood and listened in silence until we heard the door of the captain's private cabin, which stretched across the after part of the ship, close with a crash.

I had released my husband and shrunk away from him. He stood by the door with folded arms. It was my wedding night. I was alone with a man to whom I had given my word, to whom I was bound until death parted us; alone with a man whom I did not love, however much I might admire his courage or appreciate his consideration; alone with a man who did not love me, though he was my husband.

As the turmoil and confusion without died away, a silence terrible, at least to me, fell between us. Twice I essayed to speak, but words would not come. I looked

a long time at him standing there so still and silent, and then I sank down upon the one berth in the cabin and buried my face in my hands, and sobbed and quivered as if I had had a stroke. 'Twas tearless sobbing, too, the hardest to bear.

"Madam," he said, "I would open this door and go out of this room immediately, and leave it to you gladly, believe me. I have no more wish to stay than you to have me stay, but such a course, if it escaped the captain's personal notice, would be inevitably reported to him. He would know that our marriage was a mockery, a blind, a sham. There's no help for it. I must pass the night here."

"'Tis so," I replied brokenly.

"If you could only know," he went on softly, "how it cuts me to see you sob like that."

Although he looked hard at me, he made no move to touch me or even to approach me, and for that I was thankful.

"I can't help it," I gasped out.

"But you must help it. You have been awake since four this morning, and such experiences as you have passed through are enough to break the strongest down. I am infinitely weary myself, and what you must be I can scarce imagine. You need have no apprehensions. You can lie down upon that berth as freely as if you were alone in your own chamber under lock and key. I will lie here"—the cabin ran fore and aft the ship—"across the door. None can come at you except over my dead body. Dear lady," he cried passionately,

"before God, by my honor, by everything that men hold sacred, the memory of my mother, I swear that you may trust me."

"I do trust you," I said, looking up at him.

"You have my profoundest sympathy and pity," he continued reassuringly, returning my gaze calmly.

"No," said I. "You yourself said it, let us not obtrude emotions other than those that are forced upon us into this arrangement."

"And that is forced upon me, madam," he went on formally, "for I think your estate the most deplorable of any maid in this world. I think I shall kill the captain yet."

"Don't do that," I said; "at least don't murder him."

"No," he replied, "but would to God I had him opposite me with sword or pistol in his hand."

"Do you know the art of fence?"

"Enough for such a purpose, I doubt not," he replied. "But we must talk no longer. You must go to sleep. You can do so without fear. The door is a stout one and the bolt a good one, and I am here. I am a light sleeper; call me if you wish. And with your permission, I will take off my coat and use it for a pillow, and slip off my shoes. Permit a veteran sailor to advise his little shipmate"—he smiled; it was astonishing how well he looked when he smiled, even in that dim light—"to do the same."

I rose to my feet.

"I trust you implicitly," I said. "You are showing

yourself of the class of good and gallant gentlemen, whatever be your station. I never knew finer. I shall obey your instructions. Good night, and God bless you!"

"Amen to that," he replied gravely.

He turned his back upon me. I saw him slip off his coat, fold it in a pillow, and then stretch himself upon the floor, his back still toward me, his face to the door.

It was a horrible situation. And yet there was a certain amount of peace and quiet in my soul. How petty, after all, are the restrictions and conveniences of life. I even caught myself whimsically imagining the consternation that would fill Miss Clapperton's maiden soul if she could see me, her pet pupil, in a scene like this. Obediently I lay down in my berth, loosened my clothing so I could rest the better, and took off my shoes. Actually I was soon fast asleep, and, wonder of wonders, I never slept more soundly in my life.

It was broad daylight when I awoke. I was alone in the room. I lay thinking for a little space, and then I rose and tiptoed to the door. It was unbolted. Naturally, as there was no way of locking it except from the inside, my husband had been compelled to leave it unlocked. What if anyone should have come in! I shot the bolt in panic terror, making unnecessary noise as I did so. And then I heard his voice outside the door.

"Are you awake, madam?" he asked softly.

"Yes," I replied.

"'Tis four bells in the early morning watch, six o'clock. I have left the cabin that you might be free

to dress, but I waited here within call, and shall wait on guard until you come forth. Have no fear of interruption."

I was touched at this evidence of thoughtfulness. Truly God had raised up a friend indeed for me. His consideration was the more appreciated, since now I could change my clothes and take such bath as I could with the toilet utensils at hand without molestation. I luxuriated in the privacy and in the opportunity, and at six bells, an hour later, came out of the cabin a new woman.

As I left the stateroom, Sir Percy, his face red, his eyes bloodshot and inflamed, his whole appearance haggard and wretched, came out of his own room. I stood with my hand upon the arm of my husband. Brown might not be a gentleman, but he was vastly more personable, even a much better-bred-looking man, than the heir of ancient name and encumbered acres who confronted us. He lurched toward us.

"Death and hell!" cried the man under his breath, "you look as blooming as a June rose."

"Why should I not be?"

I laughed recklessly and defiantly, at which my husband also smiled.

"We hope, Sir Percy, that you had a pleasant night," added my sailor.

But Sir Percy deigned no answer. He turned and staggered through the open door. His cabin occupied the whole space under the poop deck, with cabins projecting beyond for the first and second lieutenants of

the brig, and we had but to step through a door to find ourselves on deck in the bright and brilliant morning of another day. Thank God for it.

Now, my boxes being available, I had taken care to array myself as becomingly as possible. The day before, shrouded in a cloak in the raw, rainy weather, filled with anxiety and terror, I must have looked a different woman from the picture I presented in the morning. Your blonde loves the sunshine, and does not appear her best in other weather. This was a day after my own heart.

I smiled up at my husband, and was glad and thankful. I felt that we could hold our own with Sir Percy, even though he was backed by all the power and authority vested in him from his rank and station. There was a zest about the adventure, too, despite the peril under which I lived, that brought the blood to my cheeks and sent my pulses bounding. I was in a fair way of forgetting the price that I was paying for this dangerous simulacrum of liberty, the bondage in which I stood. Well, I should realize it bitterly soon enough without doubt. Meanwhile I would not repine. I would fight the battle to the end, thanking God momentarily for my able coadjutor, and praying Him not to forsake me until I died or triumphed.

For the rest, the officers of the ship in the main left us severely alone. They were willing enough, I fancy, or would have been, to talk with me, but the grim and stalwart figure which was ever by my side was a sufficient deterrent. Naturally, Mr. Buffington hated him for

his open defiance of his authority on the *Potomac*, and he easily communicated his dislike to the others. They despised him as an American, and as a common sailor as well. The captain hated him most of all, because he was my husband. It was a strange, anomalous, impossible position. I never knew that Sir Percy had been a drinking man until I was shipmates with him, despite my own wishes. He did not lose entire command of himself, but he was more or less steadily in his cups from the hour he learned that I was married, and he grew uglier all the time.

So matters dragged on for two days. On the evening of the third the outbreak came, a climax of tragedy and misery, which made all that I had undergone before a trifle.

A ship had been sighted in the late afternoon. She was sailing on a course opposite our own, and my husband informed me that by nightfall, unless either the stranger or our own brig altered her course, the two ships would pass close to each other. Any object on the sea is of interest to a passenger, and this ship was especially interesting to Brown and to myself, for the constraint that lay between us always was not conducive to free conversation, although my husband strove manfully to divert me and cheer me, and, as I have said, often succeeded.

We watched the ship therefore from our usual promenade, the lee side of the poop deck, with a growing interest. As the day drew on, and it grew toward evening, the stranger came in plain view from the deck.

She was a big black ship with a white line pierced for guns, a ship of war, to judge by the height of her spars and the breadth of her snowy canvas. The flag that she flew was the stars and stripes. She was an American, and as he studied her long and earnestly, Brown said she was one of the greatest frigates his countrymen had built, and was named the *Constitution*.

He was strangely excited when he recognized her, or when he thought he recognized her, for without a glass he could not as yet be sure. There were other ships built on the same model as the *Constitution*, belonging to the same class, that is, and this might be one of them, he said, although he did not think so. He whispered to me that if we could once communicate our plight to that ship, we should be saved infallibly. But on my pressing him, he admitted that there was no possibility, so far as he could see, of getting tidings of our need to the Americans.

It was desperately hard for me and equally hard for him to walk quietly up and down the brig and see the great frigate rapidly nearing us, which would have insured our safety if we could have once got aboard of her. The oncoming ship was a matter of interest to the officers and crew of the *Porcupine* as well as to ourselves. They discussed her approach as they surveyed her with attention. There would be no attempt on their part to interfere with a ship of that class. She might, I thought, be swarming with English sailors and helpless women without any fear of molestation from the little brig. There was no fear of the big ship either,

it must be admitted, on the part of the officers of the brig. The *Porcupine* held her course as cockily as if she were the only vessel on the ocean. There might be a bowing acquaintance between them, or there might not, but each was supremely indifferent to the other.

I loved England, perhaps not so much so as one who had been born there, but it was my country. The flag that fluttered from the gaff end above my head was my flag, but I could not help wishing with all my soul that I was safe under the stars and stripes, and well and forever quit of the *Porcupine* and her master.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WHICH SHOWS HOW I BECOME A WAGER OF BATTLE

AFTER supper, which was more unpleasant than usual, we went on deck for a further look at the stranger, who was much nearer now. A long inspection satisfied Brown that his first guess had been correct, and that she was the *Constitution.* He hung over the rail staring at her in silence until I could bear it no longer. I was tired anyway, and so I said I would go below into the cabin.

There was no one there when I entered the main cabin. I went into my stateroom and lay down for a while, but I was too nervous and miserable to stay there. As it grew dark I arose and went out from my stateroom into the main cabin again. For one thing, I did not like to stay alone in that stateroom without my husband unless I knew the captain was on deck. I stood at the door opening on the quarterdeck and looked out a moment, and finally concluded not to go out, although it was moonlight and pleasant enough. I do not know what perverse mood had seized me, but I had had quite enough of Brown and everybody that day. At any rate, I turned back to go to my room, only to find myself in the presence of the captain.

He was perhaps not so much under the influence of liquor as usual, but his ugly temper was visibly uppermost. It was the first time I had been alone with him, and at once he caught me by the arm so that I could not escape, and began to make love to me. I strove to tear myself away; I even struck him with my hand, but in such a struggle I was no match for him. I could have screamed, and one scream would have brought my husband to me, but to be entirely frank, I was afraid to summon him. If he caught Sir Percy laying hands upon me, I knew that I would never be able to restrain him, and that murder would be the result. I did not believe that there was much of anything that Sir Percy could do to me, especially since I could, as the last resort, summon help by making an outcry, and I therefore fought him hard, trusting to my own powers to escape.

But my resistance seemed to make the baronet the more determined. He got his arm around my waist presently, and despite everything I could do, he drew me toward him. Somehow in the struggle his arm brushed across the front of my dress. The papers which I always wore there gave audible evidence of their presence. Sir Percy, evidently greatly surprised, released my waist, and before I knew what he was about, his hand sought my bodice. With no regard to me he ripped it open ruthlessly, and before I could prevent him, he drew out the papers. I was gasping and faint already from the hard struggle, and half dead with terror besides, but this insult was too much for me. That he

should have dared to lay hands upon me in any way was bad enough, but that he should have violated my dignity and my modesty by tearing open my dress was a thing unheard of. If I had had a weapon, I should have struck him. If my fingers had closed about a trigger, I should have pulled it remorselessly. This time my bullet would have spared the horse! I thought.

I stood panting before him, angry, outraged, maddened by his conduct. I am ashamed to say that I forgot that I was a woman, forgot everything in fact but that he had insulted me, and that I had lost the papers which I had taken such pleasure in guarding, with the feeling that they were a sort of compensation for the terrible demands which I made upon my husband. If I could have assured the safety of his papers by which he set so much store, I could have felt that I had done something for him in return for all he had done for me.

And now Sir Percy stood reading them, a malicious smile upon his face.

"Oho, miss, or madam," he said, "so you are in league with the enemy, and the papers that were taken from your precious husband were a duplicate set. By Gad, I believe 'twas your woman's wit that conceived the scheme, and you, a British subject, are a self-confessed traitress. I have only to say the word to have you clapped in irons. But don't be afraid," he added quickly, as I made a sudden move toward him, "I won't do it on condition."

"What condition?" I asked, not because I cared

anything about his conditions, but because I wanted to gain time to think. My brain was acting madly. I could not see any way out of the dilemma, but at all hazards time was necessary.

"If you will give up this low-born dog to whom you bound yourself—I can easily dispose of him; you need never know how—and come to the arms of a man who loves you, all the rest will be forgotten——"

"You offer me marriage, Sir Percy?"

"Well, not exactly," began the baronet; "you see——"

My look would have killed him had I possessed the basilisk eye.

He stumbled, faltered.

"Damn it all! Yes, if you can get rid of him, I'll even marry you!"

"Why, you wretched, outrageous hound!" I cried, completely forgetting birth, breeding — everything; "I would not marry you if you were the last man on earth. I told you that before, and I repeat it in cold blood. I have a husband——"

"Who is abundantly able and willing to protect you, madam," broke in Brown.

He had followed me down to the cabin, it appeared afterwards. He had seen the captain approach me. He had gone into our own stateroom and held the door ajar, ready to interfere when the necessity arose. The necessity had arisen hours ago, it seemed to me, when the captain's rude hand ripped open my bodice, but my husband, for reasons of his own, which I did not

pretend to fathom and about which I did not greatly care since at last he was here, had waited until this moment.

"Ho, ho!" laughed the captain, throwing back his head.

He opened his mouth to speak, and that instant Brown was upon him. The suddenness of his onset was unexpected by the captain. He did not know the man as I knew him. I saw death in his glance and heard it in his voice when he interposed, and now I was glad. I knew that of the three in that little cabin, one at least was doomed to die, and I believed I knew the one. I thought of nothing but the present, and a swift revenge.

As the captain staggered back under Brown's buffet —I think he struck him in the chest—before he fell my sailor caught him with his left hand, and with his right whipped that officer's sword from its sheath. Of course, Brown was allowed no weapon. The next instant he stood over Sir Percy—the captain leaned against the bulkhead—the point of the sword straight at the baronet's throat.

It was all done in the twinkling of an eye. The armed had been disarmed, and now stood helpless before the deadly enemy's point. The light from the big oil lamp hanging from the ceiling shone on the polished blade, and I had time to notice, with that close attention to details which the mind is sometimes capable of even in moments of greatest stress, that the steel was as steady as if weapon and arm that held it had been cast of the

same metal. There was a look of terror in Sir Percy's eyes. He would have cried out if he had dared.

"Listen," said my husband, "if you utter a sound, if you make a single movement, if you raise a hand, I swear to God, I'll cut your throat with your own sword."

"Would you murder me?" whispered the captain.

"No, although it is all you deserve. I had you once under my hand, and my wife has had you another time, and both times you have been spared by her kindness of heart, and now, you ravaging brute, you dare to lay hands upon her!"

"Are you going to kill him?" I whispered.

"Yes," was the answer, "but not in the way you mean."

"But—" I began.

His left hand shot out imperiously.

"I will hear no more from you, madam. I have been twice guided by you in this matter to our hurt."

"You can't keep me here all night," said the captain, recovering some of his courage. "'Tis past seven bells now, and at eight the midshipman of the watch will enter the cabin to report. You will be discovered."

"I have all the time that I require," said my husband coolly. "It won't take me two minutes to snuff out your worthless life."

"What!" exclaimed the captain, "you are going to murder me, then, after all?"

"No," answered Brown, "I am going to give you a chance for your life. You have another sword in the

inner cabin yonder. My wife shall get it for you, and then you and I will fight it out."

"I don't fight duels," sneered Sir Percy, "with common sailors."

"You're going to fight one with me," answered my husband. "I'm in no mood to spare you. I offer you a chance for your life. If you don't take it, it's because you don't think much of your life, and perhaps this will help you to realize that when two men stand together, as we do, to fight for one woman, there isn't any difference that counts in their stations."

As he spoke, he dropped the point for a moment, leaned forward and struck the captain a smart blow upon the side of the face with his naked hand.

"God!" growled Sir Percy, "I dishonor myself by crossing swords with you, but I'll do as you say. 'Tis a fight to the death with the woman yonder as the prize."

I started to speak, but my husband, who had resumed his threatening position with regard to the captain, peremptorily bade me enter the inner cabin and bring thence a sword which I should doubtless find hanging against the bulkhead. I obeyed like one in a dream. I dare not dwell upon my emotions. Here I was absolutely helpless, while these two men turned into ravening beasts fought together. I was the issue, and I was the prize. What the result of such a contest I could scarcely doubt. I had seen enough of my husband to know that he would be no mean antagonist for any man, and yet my heart sank in spite of myself, perhaps because, even

if my husband were successful, I could see no way out of the dreadful predicament in which we would thereby be plunged.

I said nothing to him. There was nothing I could say; the matter had gone too far. I brought the sword out and handed it to him.

"You will give me your word of honor," said my husband, looking toward the captain, "that you will make no outcry, that you will stand up and fight me like a man, if I give you one of these weapons. So far as I can see, they are both alike."

"By God!" cried the captain furiously, "I tell you I want nothing better. If I can't finish you in two minutes, I'm not the man I take myself for, nor the man whom I would ask a woman to love."

"And let me tell you, Sir Percy—" cried I.

"Madam," said my husband sternly, "will you be silent? This is work for men's blades, not for women's tongues. Take your stand there," he continued inexorably, pointing to a corner. "But before you do so, will you have the kindness to bolt the doors and drop the hangings before the windows? I want no interruptions in this play."

Although my limbs would scarce do their office, I moved, and obeyed the given command. 'Twas unusual to me to be so spoken, but then the whole affair was an experience the like of which I could not have imagined. Then I resumed my station in the corner, whence I could see everything. The captain tossed the papers he had filched from me on the table.

"The papers go with the woman," he said, "although how, if you should be lucky enough to strike me down, you can keep either is more than I can understand."

"Leave that to me," said my husband. "Now, sir, I have your word?"

"You have it," said the captain. "Give me a weapon."

My heart sank as I saw the eagerness with which Sir Percy grasped the sword. He swung it lightly in the air with a skill born of long practice. Excitement had cleared his brain apparently. His eye was brighter, although there was a deep red flush still upon his cheek where my husband had laid his hand. He evidently thought no foremast Jack on any sea could match him with a small sword, a weapon he had been trained to use by the best masters in Europe.

"Now, Mr. Sailor," he began sneeringly, "if you are ready."

It seemed to me upon an instant that the room was filled with flashing steel. The two men wasted no time whatsoever in preliminary courtesies. They dropped into position, and the attack began at once. It was my husband who assumed the offensive. I had seen men at sword play—indeed, I knew something of the game myself; my father had often practiced me at fence, and while I had no special skill at it, being a woman, I had knowledge enough to see that this was magnificent.

Sir Percy was on the defensive immediately. He could not give ground, for the cabin was both low and narrow. He had to stand where he was and take the as-

sault. He was hard put to it to parry the vicious thrusts which succeeded each other like flashes of lightning. I had known my husband for a man of enormous strength, but it did not seem possible to me that any human being could keep up so tireless an attack as he did for very long. And yet, as the minutes sped, his zeal and fierceness showed no abatement.

The men fought noiselessly with a concentration of hatred that was appalling. They forgot all about me, and I shrank back in my corner scarce daring to breathe. The swords were rapiers, both finely tempered, and the only sound they made was a low, ringing, slithering sound as blade ran against blade. Once, after some furious attack, Sir Percy thrust viciously in return, and a long red streak appeared upon my husband's cheek. The wound looked badly, and I could have screamed with horror as I stared at them with fearful fascination, the fascination of the combat, for I forgot that I was the prize and what depended upon it, and what might come after the issues of the hour were gone. Lost in the fury, fire and passion of the moment, I know my own breath came fast, and my bosom rose and fell beneath its dishevelment, as I stared and stared and stared.

Sir Percy had laughed when his point had traced that red line upon his enemy's cheek, but the laugh had died away. Gallant swordsman though he was, and skillful beyond imagination with his weapon, his life had been such as to unnerve him. He was beginning to grow tired. The sweat stood upon his forehead; he drew his

breath in gasps. There came a look into his face, a look that I had never seen. And then my husband laughed, a different laugh. As if by simultaneous impulse both men sprang back and disengaged. Sir Percy leaned against the bulkhead panting, glad for the respite.

My husband stepped toward him once more. Stepped toward him! He leaped upon him like a tiger. The baronet had scarce time to get in position before the blades crashed again. All that had gone before was child's play to what happened now. I saw Sir Percy open his mouth. Death was upon him, or the fear of it. He considered himself absolved from his promise, and was intending evidently to give alarm, to call for help. He never voiced that cry, for a sudden sound, sickening, different from any that had before filled the room, smote my ear. Sir Percy's arm went up in the air; he stood for a moment staggering and turned half round. I saw a bloody blade sticking out beyond his back a half a foot. The baronet's sword fell upon the table, and then clanged upon the deck. A roll of the ship unbalanced him, and he followed it and lay still.

I saw Brown weaponless look down at him, half in awe, half in contemptuous pity. Then he turned to me. The blood had streamed down his cheek and spotted his shirt. He was a horrible, a ghastly figure. I lifted up my hands, and knew no more.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

WHEREIN I AM DESERTED AND CHARGED WITH MURDER

HOW long I lay unconscious I do not know; not very long I imagine, for when I came to my senses—it was perhaps because of a great hammering on the bolted door—eight bells had passed. An effort had been made to see the captain. The door had been found to be locked. Hails had elicited nothing, and now a determined effort was being made to enter.

I struggled to a sitting position. In front of me on the floor lay a piece of paper. On it was written in large, bold letters:

I myself have killed the captain in fair duel. My wife is absolutely innocent of any connection with the transaction.

It was signed "William Brown."

For a moment I stared at it dazed, and then I saw the dead body of the captain lying where it had fallen. I looked away from the hideous sight. The cabin was empty. What had happened? I rose to my feet, and ran across to my own cabin. It was empty. Where was

my husband? Was he in hiding somewhere, and had he left this note to exonerate me? But where could he hide?

The thundering at the door continued. Voices outside, among which I recognized the first lieutenant's, declared that unless the door were instantly opened, they proposed to break it down. I thrust my husband's note into the bosom of my dress, looked to the table where the papers had lain, found they were gone, and then decided to open the door. All this had taken vastly less time than it does for me to tell it.

I stepped over to the door, drew the bolt and the door flew back, almost knocking me over, from the pressure put upon it from the outside. The first lieutenant, the watch officer, Mr. Buffington, and one or two midshipmen burst into the room. Their eyes fell first of all upon the body of the captain.

"Good God!" cried the first lieutenant, Mr. Flitcroft, his eyes almost starting from his head, "what have we here?"

"'Tis Sir Percy," answered Mr. Buffington, kneeling down beside him, "and stone dead, by Heaven! with a sword driven through his heart!"

Mr. Buffington turned the captain over. The point of the sword had been broken by Sir Percy's fall, and Mr. Buffington drew it forth and handed it to his superior officer.

"'Tis his own sword," said Mr. Flitcroft, taking it with shuddering aversion.

And indeed Sir Percy was a horrible sight. Death

had not smoothed the passion or the fear from his face. I dare not dwell upon his looks.

The two men stood staring stupidly for a minute, and then Mr. Flitcroft turned to me. With a sudden oath, he demanded:

"What do you know of this? Who hath done it?"

"Her husband belike," said Mr. Buffington.

"Mr. Buffington," said Mr. Flitcroft suddenly, "get you back on deck. Call all hands and search the ship. Say nothing of the death of the captain at present, gentlemen, until we have apprehended the murderer. As for you, madam, by Heaven! you shall tell what you know!"

I had not spoken a word. It seemed to me that I was incapable of speech. Besides, I had nothing to tell. I did not know where Brown was in hiding, but wherever he was, his situation would be hard enough when he was caught without any words from me. I knew enough of law anyway to know that no woman could be compelled to testify against her husband against her will, and my lips were sealed.

"Well, well!" cried the officer, "what is it?"

I shook my head.

"You know nothing?" he roared.

"I shall tell nothing," I answered.

"But why not?"

"Because," I said, "I'm glad he's dead."

And then I burst into a passion of weeping.

Mr. Flitcroft sprang to me and seized me by the shoulder.

"You hussy," he cried, "unless we find your husband, and can show that he did it, I shall lay charges against you. You are an accessory to the murder after the fact anyway, and perhaps before."

"It was no murder," I answered through my tears.

"What was it, then?"

But I was silent. I would not give the men the faintest clew.

"I'll make you speak," he cried, "if I have to hang your husband up by the thumbs and flog him until he confesses. There are more ways than one of making a woman talk. I'm the captain of the ship now, and I intend to know what's been done in this cabin."

He turned and looked long at the captain, and as he did so I was fearful that he would catch a glimpse of the other sword, but when I searched the room with my eyes, I could not see it. Had my husband taken it with him to some place of concealment, thinking to defend himself if he were sought for and found? But what place could there be in any ship, small or great, where a man could lie hidden for very long, or from which he could make good his defense with any prospect of success?

I was relieved from any further apprehension of the attentions of Sir Percy Reade, but I was suspected of murder, and my situation was bad enough. My word and my husband's word would weigh nothing in the passion-inflamed minds of the officers and crew of that ship. I did not know what the powers of a captain were on the high seas, or how far they extended, but I had

no doubt they were sufficient to enable him to try us both for mutiny and murder, and hang us out of hand. Well, at least I could die unsullied. My honor had been preserved by that brave, that splendid man whose name I bore. My heart ached for him. Into what miseries my chance touch of him in the coach had plunged him.

All this passed through my mind as the first lieutenant summoned one or two of the officers from the ward room below by a midshipman and bore the body of the captain into his private cabin. Then he came back, called a seaman, and left these orders.

"Watch this woman," he said. "Do not let her move from the transom where she sits until you have word from me."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the sailor, drawing his cutlass and surveying me critically. And indeed I was a mere mouthful for such as he.

After first examining all the cabins carefully, the officers went out on deck. How long I sat there in agony I know not. Even the striking of the bells forward, which was kept up with the regular, unvarying routine of a man-of-war, fell upon my ears unnoticed. I knew nothing. I was dumb with misery, only conscious of prayers that in some way God might protect my husband. After a while—I don't know how long it was—the officers headed by the first lieutenant came into the cabin again.

"Madam," said Mr. Flitcroft sternly, taking his seat at a table and beginning in a formal way while the others stood or sat about the room, their attention focussed

upon me, "the ship hath been searched from truck to keelson, not a spot hath been left unvisited—hold, storerooms, tops, chains, every place. There is not a trace of your husband to be found."

"Thank God! Oh, thank God!" I cried, in spite of myself.

"You may rather pray to Him than thank Him before we finish with you. Where the coward has gone I know not. He seems to have vanished in thin air"—my heart was leaping again, they had not found him!—"he may have gone overboard for aught I know," continued the lieutenant, "for gone he is."

Overboard! That word crushed me. And yet I did not believe that he was one who could suicide. What could have been in his mind? He would have been hanged to a certainty had he stayed, and yet he could have exonerated me! Surely so brave a man as he would not leave me alone, unfriended, to bear the brunt of these men's anger and vengeance. There was the paper—I had forgotten it—in which he had written my innocence. I had only to take it forth. But no, I would not do it. He had suffered for me, died for me—I found myself trembling with passion and grief at that thought!—at least I would not betray him.

"Madam," said the cold voice of the first lieutenant, "if we have not him, we have you. Gentlemen, Captain Sir Percy Reade has been foully murdered in this cabin here. This woman, or her husband, or both have compassed his death. The husband we cannot find. I charge her with the crime."

"Impossible!" burst from the lips of Mr. Buffington. "She could never have done it. Only a man's arm could have delivered a thrust like that."

"Sir," said I, "I thank you."

"Silence!" thundered the first lieutenant.

"Pardon, sir," said Mr. Buffington bravely enough, "every suspect has a right to be heard in defense."

"Quite true, sir," said Mr. Flitcroft, "and this woman shall be heard to-morrow morning. I charge her with the crime of murder. Mr. Buffington, you become by Sir Percy's death and my advance the first lieutenant of this brig. You will prepare orders for a court martial to meet after quarters to-morrow to try this woman for the murder of the captain."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Buffington, biting his lip.

"Woman," said Mr. Flitcroft, turning to me, "you will be allowed to select any officer in the ship to act as your counsel."

"I can defend myself, sir," I answered, "God helping me!"

"As you please."

"Gentlemen, to your stations. We will overlook the ship again by the brighter light of day. 'Tis impossible that the murderer could be concealed aboard, but we will make another search. Dismiss the men and set the watch."

The officers filed out solemnly, Mr. Buffington casting what I fancied was a look of pity upon me. I was left alone with Mr. Flitcroft and the sailor who had been appointed my guard.

"Jack," said the captain, "go out and bring me some fathoms of whale line."

"Aye, aye, sir."

And soon the sailor came back with a long coil of small rope.

"Woman, your hands," said Mr. Flitcroft.

"What are you going to do?" I faltered.

"I'm going to lash you, so that you will do no more murder until the morning. I don't trust a woman like you even locked in her cabin, where I mean you to spend the night."

I might have remonstrated, I might have protested; without a word I placed my palms together and extended my arms. He passed a lashing tightly, not rudely I will admit, and not tight enough to hurt me, but still so tightly that I could not use my hands.

"Sit down!" he said sternly.

And then he lashed my ankles together in the same way. I was entirely helpless.

"Pick her up," he said to the sailor, who lifted me awkwardly enough, but not ungently, in his arms. "Now lay her in her berth and lash the door. I will have a watch set over the door. Madam," he continued, as the sailor lowered me in my berth, "in case you should get loose, attempt at escape would be fruitless."

The door was shut and lashed, and I was alone. I turned on my side and looked, as I had often done when I thought him asleep during the long watches of the night, at the place where the faithful guardian of my honor, my husband, had lain. I could not pray to have

him back, for to have him back were to have him tried and hanged for murder. I thought indeed that he was dead and well out of it, and that I would soon follow suit. Save so far as my honor was engaged, I should make little defense. Let them do what they would with me.

As I lay there staring where I had seen the man who had served me so well, who had so magnificently carried out his part of the business arrangement entered into between us, I passionately wished with all my heart that the hideous hour had been blotted out, that I had stayed on deck until time to turn in, and that he was lying there to protect me as before.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WHICH TELLS OF A RESCUE AND DISCLOSES A PASSION

I DON'T know how long I lay in that berth in my cabin. In spite of the inconvenience, not to say pain, of the cramped position necessitated by my lashings, I think I must have fallen into an uneasy slumber, from which after a time I awakened with a sudden scream. My scream blended instantly with a hellish concatenation of sounds outside. I seemed to have been conscious of voices and hails, but however that may be, the first thing that smote my ear was the terrific roar of a discharge of heavy guns. Through the deadlight flashes of light came. An instant afterwards with a great crash the wall of my stateroom tore inboard, and a shower of splinters, none of which fortunately hit me, drove by me. There was a feeble return discharge, which I judged came from the guns of the brig, intermittent reports as if her broadside pieces had been discharged in irregular succession.

I sat up in the berth, a prey to wild terror, unable to divine what had happened. The next instant the way of the brig was checked by a terrific crash as if she had run upon a rock. A burst of wild cheering followed,

succeeded by pistol shots and the trampling of many feet upon the deck. A tumult ensued—confused noises, groans, oaths, curses, shrieks, yells, the ringing of steel on steel. It was maddening to lie and listen and to know nothing, to be able to divine nothing.

In another minute there was a pistol shot right outside my own door. A voice I knew—I recognized it with such a glad leap of the heart as I never hope to experience again—called my name.

"Caroline! Madam!" it cried.

And then the door was opened, and in burst my sailor. The light in the main cabin had not been extinguished; it was burning full, and the little room was filled with its radiance. I lifted up my hands, bound as they were, to him.

"Thank God!" I cried, "that you have come."

"Bound! Bound!" he answered. "Like a common criminal."

He had a bared and bloody sword in his hands. The red streak across his face showed grimly in the yellow light. A touch of the blade severed the lashings that bound my wrists.

"My feet as well," said I.

He knelt down instantly as he had knelt on that night in the carriage, and in a moment those lashings also parted at the touch of the keen weapon. And then!

What did he then? He seized my feet in his hands and bent his head lower—my slippers had fallen off in all the movement—and kissed them and kissed them and

kissed them, murmuring broken words, endearments, love, affection, passion. Why, this man loved me! I was his heart's idol, the adoration of his soul was mine! I should have been a block of stone had I been insensible to such a touch and such a plea. He had lost command of himself. He was completely unmanned. When still clasping my feet against his breast, he looked up at me; I could see that his eyes were filled with tears. Indeed, he was ghastly white, the whiter still because of that red line.

I was staring at him in amaze, overwhelmed by this revelation. I had thought it purely business with him, gallantry, what you will. How had this man learned to love me? What had I done or said? And my own heart was thrilled as well. My own bosom rose and fell. My pulses beat and throbbed. My head swam. Good Heaven! was it possible that I reciprocated his passion! It could not be. I clenched my lips and stared. My silence brought him to his senses.

"O God!" he said, rising to his feet. I noticed that he staggered and leaned against the bulkhead. "You must forgive me. 'Tis a business arrangement, a contract." His voice came slower. He was faltering, almost gasping. "I forgot myself—it sha'n't occur again. You are free! That was the *Constitution*. Nobody knows— Don't tell——"

He was wavering; he was going to fall. I got to my feet and put out my arm, but he thrust me away.

"Don't tell anyone," he muttered weakly, "that you are—my wife!"

And then he collapsed, dead at my feet apparently. I found instant voice at that.

"Help! Help!" I screamed wildly.

In a moment the little cabin was filled with officers and men, weapons in hand. It was a blue uniform they wore, but not that of England. I divined before they spoke that these were the men of the United States.

"Madam," said the first, a handsome young man, "are you Mistress Caroline Martindale?"

"Yes," I said, mindful of my husband's last word.

"We have come in time, then. But what's here?" he asked, looking at my feet, where my husband lay. "'Fore God, 'tis—Brown." He stooped and knelt beside him. "Show a light here," he cried.

And instantly one was forthcoming. He thrust his hand in the bosom of my husband's shirt.

"Does he live?" I whispered, and never in my life did I wait with such horrible anxiety the answer to a question as then.

"His heart beats." He tore open the shirt. "'Tis a wound here in the chest. It hath bled terribly. He has fainted merely, I venture."

"He was very good to me," I said brokenly. "I would not have him die."

"He will be worth a dozen dead men, I am sure. Here, take him aboard the frigate, some of you," he said to the sailors. "Now do you come with me, madam, if you wish to escape this ship."

"Sir," said I, accepting his hand and stepping out of the cabin, "I am alone and friendless. I have

received such hard usage from men. May I trust you?"

"There isn't a man on the *Constitution*, madam, from Captain Hull to the littlest powder monkey who would not die for you," he answered promptly. "We have heard from Mr. Brown how you have been treated. It was for that, and that we might get our own Americans from this ship, that we have seized the brig. My name is Charles Morris. I am the first lieutenant. We are bound for the Capes of Virginia, and shall be glad to give you passage."

"I shall go with you, and thank God!" I said, greatly reassured by his voice and manner.

"Have you any traps here?"

"Those two chests," I said, pointing to mine and Brown's.

"They shall be fetched at once. Now, since we have no further business here, will you go with me on deck?"

As I stepped out of the cabin in the moonlight, I saw that the brig looked almost a wreck. Her foretopmast was gone at the cap, her jib boom carried away. The heavy broadside of the frigate had smashed her sides in. Guns were dismounted. Indeed, it did not seem possible that such devastation could have been accomplished in the space of a moment; and by a single discharge!

The brig was lying alongside the huge bulk of the overtowering *Constitution*, to which she had been grappled and lashed when the two ships came together. Her crew had been driven aft into the waist, where they were

surrounded and disarmed. They were there penned in by an overwhelming body of Americans. No effort had been made to molest the officers, and Mr. Flitcroft and the others stood on the poop in furious indignation.

"Sir," said Mr. Morris, addressing himself to him without the formality of a salute, "when my men have gone back on our ship, we will cast you off, and you are at liberty to proceed on your way."

"By Heaven, sir!" thundered the captain, "the whole of England shall ring with this outrage!"

"Let it ring!" laughed Mr. Morris. "The whole of the United States has been ringing for years with similar outrages on your part, and if you can defend the kidnaping of American citizens and their wives and the coercion of helpless women, you are welcome to make the attempt."

"This means war!"

"Let it come!" cried the American; "you will find that 'twill not be play when you run up against us. I would to Heaven this brig had been one of your heavy frigates, a foeman worthy of our steel."

"You are taking off with you a murderess," said Mr. Flitcroft desperately, striving to retain me.

"Not so," said I, finding voice at last, "I am willing to speak now. Sir Percy Reade assaulted me. Mr. Brown interfered. They fought with swords. It was as fair a fight as men ever engaged in, and the best man won!"

There was a shrill note of triumph in my voice. I do not know what my gentler sisters would think of

me, but I was so wrought up by the events of that night that I scarce knew what I said or did.

"Three cheers for Will'm Brown. He killed the British captain!" cried one of the American tars.

And with that salute ringing in my ears, I was assisted up the side of the *Constitution*. The men of her crew followed after. The fastenings were cut, and amid a volley of curses and execrations from the English, the great frigate rasped alongside the brig and glided slowly ahead.

Mr. Morris led me to a stout, rubicund, jolly-looking officer of bold and yet pleasant address who stood near the gangway.

"This is the lady, sir," he began saluting, "of whom Mr. Brown told you. Miss Martindale, this is Captain Hull of the United States ship *Constitution*."

"Sir," said I, "I thank you for your rescue. They had me lashed and bound. I was to be tried and hanged for murder in the morning."

"I am glad that we were in time," said Captain Hull, "and I am sorry that we had to use force to get you, but the British were bull-headed and unreasonable as usual. You have to kill 'em to make 'em listen to an argument. I beg your pardon," he continued in some confusion, recollecting that I was English. "At any rate," he went on, "you are safe now. There's nothing on the seas that can take you from my protection. I know your kinsman, Major Martindale, and I shall see that you get safely into his hands. One of my own cabins is at your disposal, and if there is anything I

can do for your comfort, you have only to speak. We should be off the Capes in three weeks. This old ship is a swift goer, and all this trouble you have gone through will then vanish like a dream."

"You are very kind," I said, "but I must first see to the welfare of my—Mr. Brown."

"Madam, he is in the sick bay. The surgeon is attending him. I shall look after him as if he were my own son."

Strange language, thought I, for the captain of a ship.

"I must know how he is now," I said. "May I not see him?"

"Mr. Hamilton," said the captain, whereat a smart midshipman ran across the deck and saluted, "go down to the sick bay and ask the surgeon how Brown is, and whether he can be visited by Miss Martindale. We shall soon know," said the captain reassuringly. "Meanwhile, give yourself no uneasiness. It takes a lot to kill an American sailor."

The midshipman was back in an incredibly short time, it seemed to me, for presently he stopped and saluted again.

"Mr. Brown was wounded in the breast by a pistol bullet when we attacked. He was among the first of the boarders. It is only a deep flesh wound, and would have amounted to little if it had been dressed at once. He has recovered consciousness. I asked if he cared to see Miss Martindale, and he bade me say not at present; that he will be glad to see her when he is a little

better, probably in the morning. Those are his and the surgeon's own words, sir," said the midshipman.

"That's well, Mr. Hamilton. Now, madam, will you be pleased to go to your cabin?" said Captain Hull.

"One more question, captain?"

"And what is that?"

"Those papers?"

"Mr. Brown placed them in my hands last night."

My heart exulted in the news.

"The dispatches shall go to the President at the earliest possible moment," continued Captain Hull. "They mean war, and war for which we have longed."

"They are safe, then?"

"Safe, thanks to you, madam."

There was nothing now to keep me on deck, and as 'twas hard upon midnight I gave him my hand and he led me to the cabin, showed me into the comfortable little room that was to be my own, and left me, free, rescued, happy but for the man below with the bloody mark across his cheek, who would not see me that night, whom I remembered as I sat down upon the berth to have seen in his last conscious moment kissing my feet like a madman. There sat the two chests, his and mine, side by side. There was space before the door for him to lie and guard me, but now there was no need. My marriage had accomplished its purpose, and it was over. We would try to pick up the broken threads of life and draw apart, my sailor and myself, in the morning. Or would we, after all?

CHAPTER TWENTY

WHICH RELATES HOW I WAS KISSED AND KNEW IT NOT

NEVER in all my life did I enjoy such refreshing sleep. The sense of absolute safety which had been absent from my consciousness since the affair of the inn probably brought this about. I was too tired even to speculate as to the means whereby my rescue had been effected before I went to sleep. And besides I was thinking too much of my husband for anything else. But morning brought the subject before me with all its perplexities. I determined that to find out the whole thing should be my first business. If my husband were well enough to see me, I should find out from him; if not, from the officers of the ship.

I had overslept myself, for when, after making as careful a toilet as the resources of my small wardrobe permitted, I entered the main cabin, which was a most spacious and elegant apartment—evidently the captain of such a ship as the *Constitution* was a great personage and was treated accordingly—I found it empty, although the table was set. I had scarcely examined it a moment before a negro, in some sort of a uniform, a livery perhaps, made his appearance, asked my pleasure

and speedily brought me a delightful sea breakfast. He was the captain's steward and said to me that Captain Hull, who was busy about his morning inspections—a sailor can see how late it was from that—had sent word that I was to have everything that I desired.

I had scarcely finished my breakfast, which I ate alone, before the captain entered the cabin. I had liked him the night before and I liked him better in the morning. There was a bluff heartiness about him—although he was by no means the typical sailor of the old school—which won my heart. His manners could be very fine on occasion and I evidently bade fair to rise high in his good graces. He surveyed me approvingly—my gown was a charming one, I fancied: I always do have taste in dress, and I knew my face and figure—and after we had passed the compliments of the day, he asked me if there was anything that he could do for me.

"There is," I said promptly.

"And what is it, madam? If it be in my power as captain of this ship, it shall be done."

He said that with quite an air as if the captain of a ship could do anything. Really there was no very great difference in assumption of authority between Captain Hull and Captain Harks; save that one was in degree a gentleman and the other wasn't, their point of view was much the same.

"It is in your power, sir. First of all, I wish to know how does my friend of last night?"

"Exceedingly well; in fact, in spite of the advice of the surgeon, he is up and about the decks this morn-

ing. The wound was nothing but a severe flesh wound and he only fainted from excitement, exertion, and loss of blood. You see, he was in the water an hour or more before we picked him up."

"I did not know that."

"God bless me, madam, it was a most daring adventure. The man actually plunged overboard from your ship. He's a superb swimmer and kept himself afloat in the ocean for an hour or perhaps more on the small chance that we would run him down. By Heaven, it was a thousand to one that we had missed him. The moonlight was faint, the moon was setting, and 'tis hard to hear the voice of a swimmer in the smother and noise made by a big ship on a bowline like this one. Some one did hear him fortunately. We backed the mainyard, lowered a boat, took him aboard, heard his story, and you know the rest."

"Captain Hull," I said impulsively, "who and what is that young man?"

"He — er — he is a sailor, madam, an American sailor."

"Did you know him before he came aboard this ship?"

"Well—yes—I admit that I did know him."

"Do any of your officers know him?"

"Mr. Morris, my first lieutenant, does, and one or two of the others."

"Who is he, then?"

"My dear lady," said Captain Hull, with some embarrassment. I imagine this honest gentleman could have

faced a ship-of-the-line with more composure than he met my question. "The fact is—in short, madam, you must seek information on these points from Mr.—er—Brown himself."

"But he is a gentleman," I said in desperation.

"That you ask the question implies a doubt in your mind which I at least cannot resolve."

There was evidently nothing to be extorted from the captain, who, for all his good nature, I found could be stern enough on occasion. Well, I dropped the subject and said to him:

"You say that Mr. Brown is able to be about?"

"I saw him on deck, sitting on the boom boats in the waist not ten minutes since. And, by the way, let me caution you: seamen on board vessels of war are not addressed as Mister unless they have attained a certain rank."

"But you called him Mister yourself a minute ago!" I said impudently.

"Well, I did not wish to reprove you too directly," he laughed, amused at my quick retort. "I simply fell in with your phraseology, you see. If you please, we will call him Brown."

"Very good," said I, smiling at the identity of the lessons I was receiving from these shipmasters, "since Brown is about, may I have a few moments' conversation with him?"

"Well," said the captain doubtfully, rubbing his head somewhat nervously. "Yes, I suppose so."

"Shall I go to him?"

"God bless me, madam, certainly not! You had best have him in here. I shall be on deck for half an hour or so and I will have him sent to attend you."

"Thank you very much, Captain Hull," I returned. "Naturally, I am not ungrateful to this sailor who hath done so much for me, and I should like to ask him a few questions and say what seems proper."

"Quite so, quite so, madam. I am sure it does you infinite credit; your heart, I mean. In short, I will send him to you at once."

The captain of a ship is quickly obeyed evidently, for Captain Hull had scarcely left the cabin before my sailor presented himself at the door. The *Constitution* had a high poop like that of the *Porcupine*, and to enter the captain's quarters it was only necessary to open the door.

Brown was very pale; that livid line across his cheek was covered with a plaster which hid its redness and was more disfiguring than the mark. His head was bound up. It was learned afterwards that he had been hit over the head by a cutlass, fortunately not seriously hurt, the blow being turned by a steel boarding cap. He had his hand pressed close to his breast, his arm carried in a sling, not because his arm was hurt, but in order that no motion of his hand might disturb the wound in his side. He looked very weak and unsteady, but stood balancing himself to the gentle roll of the ship composedly enough.

"Mr. Brown," I said, somewhat at a loss to begin, "won't you sit down?"

I indicated a chair by the table. I even poured out a glass of Captain Hull's generous old Madeira and pressed it upon him.

"'Tis hardly meet, madam, that a sailor should sit in his captain's cabin and before a lady."

"But a husband," said I, with a meaning glance at him, "may surely sit in the presence of his wife."

"If she invite him, yes."

"And you will drink my health?" I continued, pressing my glass upon him, "as you drank it on the other ship?"

"'Tis Captain Hull's wine," he said, smiling faintly and holding the glass in his hand.

"The captain has made me free of the cabin and all that is in it, therefore for the moment this is mine."

"Your health, madam, and your happiness!" he said, bowing gently and draining the small glass.

It put a little color in his face, too, I was glad to notice.

"First of all," said I, when he had set the glass down, "I want an explanation from you."

"Madam," he returned gloomily, "what explanation can I give you? I forgot myself. I had been in agony since I left you; I did not know what might be happening to you. Those hours dragged so. When our broadside struck the brig and I knew that your cabin was under fire— Indeed, madam, you must forgive me. I was wounded. I know not what I did, what I said. I was mad."

"'Tis not about that I wish an explanation," I said,

a strange glow suffusing my whole body, and it was not an unpleasant feeling either.

"But you will accept my apologies, my sincere, my heartfelt regrets for it, I beg of you. Indeed, my words did not represent the state of my feelings. They represent nothing but the distraught and foolish notions of a man who was even then losing command of himself. I believe I collapsed at your feet."

"I forgot them the moment they were uttered," I said coldly, and yet not altogether unkindly. I could not force myself to be cruel to him then.

"I should be the last person," continued Brown, leaning his arm upon the table and looking earnestly at me, "to forget that the arrangement that was entered into between us was for a mere matter of convenience, for a purpose. The purpose having been achieved, the relationship is—dissolved."

"Yet you cannot be any the less my husband or I any the less your wife because we are free of our danger."

"Alas, no, madam, but I think it may be that Providence will be kind to you. You are owed much for this suffering, and you may be free sooner than you think. I had some idea that you might have been released last night."

"It is of last night that I wish to speak. You left me in a dead faint in the cabin. I don't think I ever fainted before in my life, but I could not survive the horror of those few moments. Just Heaven! when I saw you two men battling for me, for my freedom, for my

liberty, for my honor, it was magnificent. You fought him! You killed him! There," I said, pressing my hand to my lips, "I cannot speak of it."

"Say no more about it, madam. It was Fortune's unkindness that it had to be before your eyes. I regret that part of it, nothing else."

"What did you do then?"

"I jumped overboard and managed to reach this ship," he answered, readily enough, "and I——"

"Stop!" said I. "That is not the way I would be told. I want the whole story from beginning to end, all the details. Can't you imagine how eager I am? Tell me everything, all that you did and said and thought; all that was said and done on the ship! Remember that I know nothing, except that you killed him; that you rescued me and that I am here."

"You lay a hard task upon me."

"But since I have known you, you have done nothing but discharge hard tasks for me," I said.

"'Tis part of my bargain. You saved my papers. They are in the captain's hands, and as fast as this ship can bear them across the ocean, they are being carried to their destination. I owe you everything, and whatever you ask I will gladly do."

It was kind; nay, more, it was generous for him thus to assume the burden of the obligation.

"Well, then, tell me what happened first of all."

"I saw you faint. I knew that your unconsciousness would be temporary. I knew also that in a little space the death of the captain would be discovered. I felt that

they would regard it as mutiny and hang me for murder and perhaps treat you harshly as accessory before and after the fact."

"But it was not murder; it was a fair duel," I interrupted.

"I know that, but ask yourself, would it have been possible for us to have persuaded them to that belief?"

"I fear not."

"My first concern was your immediate safety, and my second was your ultimate safety. I confess I have been in critical situations before, but never in one which demanded so much quick and concentrated thought as this one. I assured your present safety by writing that note and acknowledging that I alone was guilty. I knew that if you presented that, you would be accounted innocent, being a woman. At least, I hoped so. And I am unable to understand why I found you tied and bound and guarded by the man whom I shot before your door."

"Was he, too, killed?"

"I know not. He barred the way to you and I pistolled him. I should kill anybody who prevented—I mean, I cannot tell how badly he was hurt."

"Go on," said I. "It is your story I want now, not my own."

"Then I bent over you. I——"

He stopped.

"Have you ever told me an untruth, Mr. Brown?"

"Only one."

"And what was that?"

"'Tis of no consequence and I beg you not to press me with regard to it. 'Tis a trifle, and——"

"Are you telling me the truth now?"

"Absolutely."

"Will you continue to do so?"

"I will."

"What did you do when you bent over me?"

"'Tis ungenerous, madam, thus to press me."

"I should like to know."

"I kissed your hand."

"Is that all?"

The perspiration fairly stood out on the man's forehead.

"Madam, we had been good friends, had we not?" he said appealingly. "Shipmates, good comrades? We had fought a good battle together and I was about to adventure further. Surely, you will make allowances?"

"Allowances for what, sir?"

"For what I did."

"And what was that?"

"You will have it," he said desperately. "I kissed you."

"Kissed me!" I exclaimed, my cheek flushing, my heart throbbing.

"Aye, you may despise me for thus taking advantage of your helplessness, but I did it."

He said it as if he would like to do it again, I thought, as if he were not at all ashamed of it—the wretch.

"Where did you kiss me?" I asked.

"I—I know not."

"Have you so soon forgotten?"

"For God's sake, madam!"

"Where, then?" imperatively.

"On your lips," desperately.

"And so you took advantage of a fainting, helpless woman?"

"Yes, 'tis a part of my error for which I humbly sue forgiveness and shall make what atonement I can."

"You can never make atonement, sir," I cried, recovering myself.

"At least, I can but try, madam."

"Proceed, sir!" said I, as cool as you please.

And yet the thought that he had kissed me at that moment somehow or other filled my soul with joy. I would that I had been awake, alive to— What could I be thinking of? Caroline Martindale and this——

His voice went on.

"I tore myself away from you with the prayer that God might have you in His keeping. I seized the papers from the table, wrapped them in an oil-skin packet I had so that the water might not hurt them, took the sword with which the captain had fought, returned it to its sheath in the private cabin——"

"I noticed that it was not there," said I.

"And then with one look toward you, I passed out of the main cabin, crawled through an open port aft, caught the Jacob's ladder dangling from the stern, and dropped noiselessly into the water."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

IN WHICH I AM TOLD A STORY THAT CONTENTS MY HEART

THE instant I struck the water," continued my husband, "I dove and swam outside the wake of the brig. I stayed under as long as I could, and when I came to the surface I took just time for breath and dove again."

"You must be an accomplished swimmer, sir?"

"I am as at home in the water as on a ship."

"Is there any place in which you are not at home?"

"I fear I cut a poor figure in my lady's chamber, madam."

"I don't know as to that," I said indifferently, "but go on!"

"By this time, since no one had noticed me, I was confident that I would not be seen. A head in the water at night, even in the moonlight, is a small object, and unless some one happens to be watching closely it is not likely to be observed. Besides I heard eight bells struck forward just as I left the brig and I knew that the tragedy would soon be discovered."

"Were you thinking of committing suicide that you plunged overboard and left me?"

"Madam," he protested solemnly, "nothing was farther from my thought. 'Twas not an idle action, or a coward's flight. Had there been no other way, I had counted it a happiness to die with you, if I could not die for you. But I knew that ship coming down upon us was the *Constitution.* I had accurately calculated from my knowledge of ships and sea that she would pass close by the spot where I left the brig unless she changed her course."

"And if she had changed her course?"

"I should have swam on and on and on while strength lasted."

"And then?"

He lifted his arms in a meaning gesture.

"But you would not have given up instantly even then?" I asked eagerly.

"Never!" said the man simply. "I never have, I never shall give up anything which I have attempted."

He looked at me for the thousandth part of a second and then turned his eyes away. Was he attempting me, I wondered? Strange, as he looked away I seemed to sway toward him a moment. Or was it the motion of the ship? Certainly that latter. I could not be such a fool.

"How long were you in the water?"

"Time goes slowly under such circumstances. I know now that it was perhaps an hour and a half."

"Were you not tired out?"

"It was not particularly easy, but there was that in my heart which sustained me."

"And what was it?" I asked imprudently.

And yet I wished to know.

"The thought that I could be of service to the—that I could carry out my part of the bargain."

"And the ship came down just as you had planned?"

"Just as I hoped, madam. She seemed a long time in coming. I watched her rise upon the limited horizon before my head, half submerged in the great rolling waves, and prayed as I had never prayed before that I might be in her course."

"And then?"

"My prayers, perhaps as they were for another, were answered. The ship bore down upon me. Treading the water, I raised myself as far as I could above the sea and cried madly. Her black bulk swept alongside of me. No one made a sound. Abreast her quarter I called again and again and again. Just as she drew ahead of me, a wave overwhelmed me and the hail that was flung from her deck I caught no sound of. Despair filled my heart for the moment. Indeed had I been less—under other circumstances perhaps I might have thrown up my hands and sunk down, but I battled on, staring as I rose with each huge wave at the moving ship that carried my hope, my life, my all. Presently, however, I saw her swing to the wind. They had heard me then, for the ship's way was checked and she lay silent athwart her former path and broadside to my vision. I knew then that they would send a boat for me. I saw it drop from the side. I had but to keep afloat and lift my voice until they found me and hauled me aboard, exhausted but

happy, for I knew now that your safety, your rescue was a matter of hours.

"Wet and dripping as I was, I insisted on seeing the captain at once. Captain Hull had some slight knowledge of my people and myself. He was the more willing, therefore, to credit my strange tale. I handed him the dispatches, saved by your courage and constancy, for which we can never thank you enough, and then told him your story."

"Did you say that we were married?"

"Certainly not. Why should I humiliate you by proclaiming that unfortunate tie when there is no necessity?"

"Why, indeed?" said I coolly, whereat he gave a great start and his free hand clenched on the table. "What then?"

"I told Captain Hull your story. I told him of the *Potomac's* men who had been pressed on the brig, of the danger you had been in, of the fact that I had slain the captain in a fair fight, and I begged him to take you off the ship. He is the greatest of our seamen, madam, as the world shall see so soon as war is declared.

"Where you sit now, in this very cabin, he brought his hand upon the table with a mighty blow and swore that he would take you off, if he sank the brig. The *Constitution* is the fastest ship of her size on the ocean. She could sail all around that brig, speedy though she was. Captain Hull summoned all hands, sent the men to quarters, cast loose his guns, and bore away in pur-

suit of the *Porcupine*. He ranged alongside easily enough to windward, blanketed the brig so that her way was lost and then Mr. Morris hailed."

"What did he say?"

"Did you not hear?"

"I think I must have dropped asleep for I remember nothing."

"Mr. Morris asked the name of the brig and was informed that it was the *Porcupine*. He advised her captain that his was the United States ship *Constitution*. He directed that the brig be hove to and declared that he would send a boat aboard. Those Englishmen were plucky. I think whoever answered the hail said that he'd be damned—if you will pardon the language?"

"I want the facts," said I. "I have heard rougher language than that on this cruise and seen things beside which any words are trifles."

"Very good. He said he'd be damned if he'd heave to or receive a boat from anybody on the ocean.

"'You have on board of you a lady whom you are detaining against her will,' cried Mr. Morris. 'You have eight seamen taken from the American merchant ship, *Potomac*, whom you have pressed without a shadow of warrant. We intend to have those men and that lady.'

"'Those men,' was the reply from the brig, 'are British seamen, duly entered on this ship. The lady is charged with murder and will be tried by court martial in the morning.'

"The two ships had been gradually approaching each other.

"'I warn you,' came from the brig, 'to sheer off. You'll be into us in a moment.'

"'We mean to be into you,' cried Mr. Morris. 'We're resolved to have those men and that lady if we have to take them by force. For the last time, will you heave to or will you not?'

"'I will not.'

"At this moment, Captain Hull took a hand.

"'I'll give you ten seconds to obey my commands; at the end of that time I'll fire into you,' he said.

"Then he began counting. The ship was as still as death. He counted slowly and deliberately. From the brig we could hear confused noises as of men handling the guns. Her ports were dropped. At the word 'Nine' Captain Hull stopped.

"'Will you heave to?'

"A shot from one of the brig's forward guns was the answer.

"'Fire!' roared our captain.

"Half a broadside was poured into the brig. The *Constitution* forged ahead. The English made an ineffective reply. A shift of the helm threw the frigate athwart the course of the *Porcupine* and boarders were called away. I happened to be in the forefront of the boarders."

Happened to be! I thought, smiling.

"And the rest you know. I cut down one man, but before I did so, he was unfortunate enough to shoot me. The ball struck me in the breast and glanced around a rib, making a great wound and letting much blood, but

not seriously damaging me. I am sure had it not been for that, the scene in the cabin would not have been enacted. That is all."

"'Tis an interesting account," said I, "but no great exploit for a ship like this to capture a brig like that."

"You say true, madam. It was a small matter for a ship like this. But it meant a great deal to you," he added dryly.

"Certainly it did," said I. "How will your captain justify his course?"

"It will need no justification I think. 'Tis not half so bad as was the case of the *President* and the *Little Belt*, or the *Chesapeake* and the *Leopard*. And you and I and the other seamen are justification enough if any were needed."

"'Tis a splendid story, sir," I said, after a short pause, "and once more am I in your debt."

"But you saved my papers, madam."

"I put the high value upon my action in that matter and still I am in your debt."

"'Tis presumption in me to ask," said he, evidently fearful of my persistency, "but how came you bound and gagged?"

"I was a prisoner charged with murder, about to be tried for my life in the morning."

"But I left you an exoneration. Did you not see it?"

"I have it here," I answered, drawing it forth from my dress.

"They let you keep it?"

"They never saw it."

"What!" He rose to his feet. "You don't mean that you allowed them to charge you with murder when you possessed this evidence?"

"What would you have me do?" I asked. "You had killed the man for me. I did not know where you were. They sought you throughout the ship. I fancied you in hiding. I never dreamed that you would seek the other ship. I could not expose you to greater anger than they would naturally bear against you."

"And you kept that secret, madam, and submitted to the indignity of those lashings for me. Great Heaven!" he leaned his head upon his hand. "I don't understand."

"Would I have all the benefit on my side and all the sacrifice on yours?" I asked. "There was little enough that I could do for you to carry out my part of the bargain."

"Oh, yes," he said, sighing deeply, "the bargain, always the bargain! What else?"

"Naught else, to be sure. And now tell me why you bade me conceal the fact of our marriage?"

"Why mention it? As I said, it would subject you to inquiry and criticism and comment. The marriage means nothing to you, nothing to me. It is a mere form."

"It is a form that saved my life and honor."

"Well, then, 'tis more happy than most marriages, and like Mercutio's wound, it hath served its purpose."

And so my sailor could quote Shakespeare! Women

in that time were not familiar with Shakespeare, but I had read the plays with my father and I knew.

"And so you don't intend that it shall be told?"

"No, madam, if it rests with me."

"And to what end?"

"In the hope that God may make you a widow without the necessity of your disclosing that you have been a wife."

"And you do not intend to tell anyone on the ship?"

"Not I," he said, lifting his head.

"Why not?" I repeated womanlike, coming back to the question which had been answered and yet not answered several times already.

"Do you think," he burst out, "that because you are born to the quarterdeck and I to the fo'c's'l, as it were, I have no pride? Do I wish to acknowledge as my wife a woman who came to me as part of a bargain? Nay, I have no more desire for that than you have to acknowledge a man who wooed you for the same reason."

"We are married in the sight of God!"

"So I suppose, but it's not necessary to proclaim the fact in the sight of men. And now I have your permission to withdraw?"

"Shall I not see you again?"

"As for seeing, madam, I shall see you whenever you are on deck, and you may look at me an you will among the rest of the stout seamen of this great ship."

"Shall I not meet you again?"

"I fear not. There is less intercourse between the quarterdeck and the fo'c's'l on the man-of-war than

there was upon the *Potomac*." He smiled faintly. "And you doubtless recall the captain's lessons in etiquette."

"I do recall them," said I. "And so you are going to be a sailor?"

"'Tis my station and there I belong."

"And I may not meet you? We shall have no more opportunity to speak together, no more walks upon the quarterdeck, my hand upon your arm, listening——"

"Forbear!" he said hoarsely, staring at me.

"Oh, very well," said I. "I am a wife, a dutiful wife I trust. What my husband says, I do."

"You are pleased to mock me?"

"By no means. This then is good-by?"

I rose to my feet. He followed suit.

"Shall I not have speech with you at all then?"

"Toward the end of the voyage, when we reach the Capes. Captain Hull has promised to transship us to such coasting vessel as may be available, and I have sworn to deliver you safely to Major Martindale. After that I am for Washington."

"And then?"

"Out of your life, perhaps out of my own."

"You take a melancholy view of the future, sir?"

"I have no option. But this is all beside the question. As you said, this is good-by."

"Good-by, sir!"

I extended my hand.

"Might I?"

He bent low over it.

"You may kiss it, sir."

"As subject the hand of his queen, madam," he added, suiting action to word.

"Farewell, sir!"

He turned away and walked slowly to the door. And he staggered. My heart went out to him as he walked. Had he meant those wild words when he held my feet to his lips the night before, or was what he said now the truth?

"Stay!" I cried impetuously as he reached the door. "You have borne yourself like a good and gallant gentleman whatever you may be. In past, in future, I shall never forget that, and while we can be nothing toward each other hereafter I consider it no dishonor to bear the name and be the wife, so far as I am the wife, of so brave and true a man."

His face lightened a little. He bowed profoundly to me.

"You honor me. I thank you and I bless you," he said, and he was gone before I could call him back or say another word.

What was in my heart? How did I think upon this man? What condescension trembled upon my lips? What was my purpose? He had been here and now he was gone, my heart would fain have had him before me at my feet, but pride—what else was it, I know not—kept me silent. I looked down at my foot—'twas a small one in truth and well shod—and he had kissed it! my husband! I could not see my lips, but he had kissed those, too. I wondered how I could have remained unconscious during that happy performance!

I went out upon the deck and my eyes sought him. He was there. He had stepped across the mystic line beyond the mainmast which divided us forever. The great gulf was fixed 'twixt him and me. I saw him go slowly forward and then sad-heartedly I turned to greet the captain and the other officers of the ship, among whom I took my rightful place.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE CONSPICUOUS FAILURE OF MY HUSBAND

THE next three weeks passed by rapidly enough. The officers of the American ship from the captain down vied with one another to make the time pass pleasantly to me. Indeed I suspect I was rather a godsend to them, for Captain Hull remarked that one woman bade fair to break up the discipline and order of the frigate, and if the cruise were to be protracted long enough, he would have to abdicate his command! The weather was delightful. Nothing untoward happened. The winds were generally fair and we made great progress.

During this whole period I did not once speak a word to my husband, although I saw him frequently. I spent my hours almost altogether on deck and my eye sought him again and again as he was busied about his duties on the ship. His sought me, too, when he thought I was not observing him. Once or twice when his duties brought him aft and I was studiously busying myself concerning other things, I turned sharply and caught him staring at me like—I had almost said from his intensity, a hungry wolf, save that no wolf's glance ever held admiration, jealousy, sentiment, or appeal.

I will admit that I did not discourage attentions from some of the younger officers, and that once or twice unnecessary cordiality on their part or mine may have awakened feelings in Brown's breast. I hope so. I was woman enough to enjoy it. He had laid down the conditions of our lives. We were to be apart. I intended to let him see what it meant. Once or twice he had opportunity to speak to me, if he had wanted to do so, but he had refrained from availing himself of his chances, and I had sworn that I would die rather than speak first. So I passed him by, to quote Shakespeare again, as the idle wind which I respected not. Respected not! I do believe that I was actually beginning to care for this man.

I know I passed long hours in my cabin alone, thinking and dreaming, generally about him. It was absurd, impossible, preposterous, ridiculous; every disdainful adjective in my vocabulary I applied to the possibility, and yet it was there. I had only to look at my foot to remember the pressure of his lips upon it, and——

It was madness. I never could, I never would, be anything to this man more than I was now. And yet what was I now? His wife, and death only could dissolve that bond. He had said that perhaps Providence would be kind to me and make me a widow before I was a wife. But would that be kindness? Did I want Providence to interfere in that way? Certainly, I was not bloodthirsty; I did not want his death on my hands. In fact, my blood went cold at the thought of it. But was that only because of womanly pity or tenderness?

I am quite sure that I rejoiced when Sir Percy was killed and I did not think of him now with any regret. But that my husband should be cut down——

I closed my eyes and saw him as he lay white at my feet after that mad, passionate, rapturous, never-to-be-forgotten outburst, and I shuddered at the recollection as I blushed at what had preceded his collapse. Once I caught myself laying my hand upon my foot where he had kissed it, and— But, no, I would do nothing so foolish.

So the days ran on. I was outwardly happy, inwardly miserable. And yet sometimes I was inwardly happy, too. The inward happiness was real and the inward misery was the result of artificiality and convention. I did not want the man dead; I did not want to be freed in the only way I could be freed. I did not want to be bound. I did not want him to love me. I should have died if he had loved anybody else, I thought, with a sudden leap of my heart in my breast that fairly shook me with emotions. I did not love him, and yet the thought of caring for anybody else was as repugnant as the thought of his caring for anybody else. Was ever woman so torn?

If he had not been so poor and so humble and so utterly beneath me in station, as far below me in station as he was above me in courage, resource, and everything that a woman ought to love in a man! And yet he was a common sailor, ordered peremptorily about by the very midshipmen on the frigate, the people with whom I associated, let us say on terms of superiority, for their

deference and courtesy to me were touching. I should instantly sink to the level of their servants if I remained bound to this man. I had to remain bound, of course. The tie could be loosened in only one way, and as I said, the thought of that way filled me with apprehension and dismay.

If I had enjoyed the opportunity of free intercourse with him, perhaps things might have been different; but there we were on the same ship, seeing each other hourly, tied, bound together not only by community of experience, not only by heroic undertakings in which we had both borne a part, for I had done something for him after all, but by a legal and moral tie which could not be severed. And yet as far apart in one sense, thrust apart, held apart, as if he had been at the antipodes. And that very situation provoked constant thought. I dwelt upon it until its familiarity robbed it of much that was unpleasant.

And Brown was so good to look at, too, except for a sort of saturnine gloom which I thought I could account for by my own actions, for it must be admitted that I coquetted outrageously with the young officers of the ship. Once or twice in our grim intercourse he had smiled upon me, and I never forgot that he was a very handsome man when he smiled. I wished I could see him smile again. I was not bad looking either, with my blue eyes, golden hair, fair complexion, and red cheeks. We made a complete and perfect contrast and as such would have gone admirably together if only conditions had been different.

I had no wedding certificate, but the paper in which he had acknowledged me incidentally as his wife, while endeavoring to free me from charge of complicity in Sir Percy's death, I still retained. I wore it over my heart, and once or twice I almost kissed it. I lifted it to my lips and stopped. I wanted to but I simply would not. On the first of these occasions I threw it from me in pretended disdain, and then shamefacedly went back to my cabin several hours later and carefully rescued it from the corner of the deck to which it had fallen. I felt better with it over my heart. You see, a woman who is married likes to have some sort of certificate, no matter how her marriage has turned out. If the *Potomac* reached Virginia and I could come upon old Dr. Tooker once more, I would make him rewrite the one Sir Percy had destroyed for me. I was married, in spite of everything, and I wanted some other evidence of it than my word or his word. Alas, I found some evidence of it in my wildly beating heart whenever I thought on it, and I thought on it all the time.

Well, matters remained in this state until we were well in the Chesapeake. There Captain Hull, who was bound for Philadelphia, transshipped us to a small coasting schooner destined for Richmond, up the James River. Bag and baggage, Brown and I were deposited on the deck of the schooner. I was to be landed at Eastcourt, Major Martindale's plantation, and my husband (who was now fully recovered from his wounds save for a faint red scar across his cheek which others might have thought a disfigurement, but which to me was a most

becoming thing—for had it not been got in defense of me?) was to ride posthaste to Washington with the dispatches.

It was a heavenly day in the early part of June. The wind was fair for our destination, the tide favored us, and as we had been transshipped in the early morning, Brown hoped that we might reach our destination (something like ten leagues or so up the James River) by nightfall.

My parting with Captain Hull and his officers had been rather a hard one. They had done so much for me; they had shown me so much kindness; they had been so attentive, so generous, so devoted that I could scarcely retain my composure when I bade them good-by. And one thing that Captain Hull said rather unmanned me.

"Madam," he whispered, as he shook me by the hand last of all and ushered me through the gangway, "I shall dance at your wedding to some good American gentleman yet, if I am lucky enough to escape a British bullet."

Well, the parting was over and there we sat in the cockpit of the little sloop, my husband and I, alone together for the first time since that morning on the *Constitution*. He showed no inclination to converse, after having given me his opinion as to the probable duration of our present little voyage, and it was left for me to begin. Perhaps it was my prerogative, not merely on account of my sex, but on account of my station being superior to his. Indeed he showed to me, as he had shown all through our joint career, a strange

deference and delicacy, to which I had become so used, in fact, that I should have been shocked beyond measure at anything different.

"Will you tell me again," I asked, "your plans exactly as they are?"

"My present purpose is to land at your kinsman's plantation, to leave you in the boat while I apprise him of your arrival, and tell him as much of your story as will account for it, and then to take horse immediately for Washington with these precious dispatches for which you have hazarded so much and for whose preservation our gratitude is due to you entirely."

"And then, sir?"

"Why, then, madam, I shall disappear forever from your life."

"I shall miss you," I said softly, looking away from him.

"You have got along well enough without me for three weeks on the frigate, and I have not noticed any evidence of regret on your part at our separation."

"Oh, you have been watching me, have you?" I cried, with a simulation of resentment in my voice.

"Every man on that ship was watching you. They don't often get a chance to look at a woman as beautiful as you are," he said fiercely, as if the words were wrung from him, "and I but watched with the rest."

How delightful to have him jealous and to think me beautiful!

"And so you think I am good to look at!"

"'Twas the prevalent opinion on the ship, madam.

I have no thoughts other than those I have expressed," he replied, with what I believed to be an affectation of indifference.

I could see that he was putting terrible constraint upon himself.

"You said you were going out of my life," I ran on. "Where are you going?"

"Madam, does my future concern you?"

"I am still your wife," I said. "That tie cannot be broken. Naturally, I am interested in where you are and where you will be. I should like to have tidings of you, to know of your success in life, and——"

"How coolly impersonal," he cut in sharply. "I suppose, of course, you would like to hear of my death, to know when you are free, and——"

"You wrong me," I said quietly; "your death is the last thing of which I wish to hear."

"Do you mean——"

He turned suddenly and bent toward me. I put up my hand.

"I mean only that I should be the veriest ingrate to wish you any harm. What have you not done for me!"

"Nothing, nothing. I should like to do——"

"This is dangerous ground," said I perversely; "we traverse the agreement."

"You are right, madam. I recall the bargain."

"My interest in you is purely grateful and friendly," I continued, determined to punish him, although this was an untruth and now I knew it to be an untruth.

"From whatever cause it arises, I presume I should be duly appreciative of your interest."

"And are you?" I asked artlessly.

"Of course, certainly. How could you think otherwise?" he burst out with grim and cynical humor. "Your condescension fills me with joy and amazement."

"I am glad to please you," was my impudent rejoinder. "And so you are going to Washington tonight."

"Immediately. The quicker the better."

"Are you then so anxious to leave me?"

"To get the dispatches into President Madison's hands. Leaving you has nothing to do with it."

"I see. And what if Major Martindale will not receive me?"

"There does not live a man on earth who would not receive you gladly."

"Except yourself."

"Except myself, and even I— Good God, madam, can't you understand that if your life is wrecked by this tie, which means everything and nothing, mine is too?"

"You love some woman then?"

"I—Yes, I do."

"And you deceived me?" I cried, my face aflame with indignation and another sensation which I could hardly describe in my breast.

"No, I did not deceive you."

"But what do you mean?"

"Madam," said he, "you play with me. You ask

me questions which I will not answer. There is a limit even to a wife's privilege."

"And you avail yourself of it?"

"I do."

"Very good, sir," said I, submissively enough, for I now thought I knew the woman he loved—I had received evidence as to that—and since he would not speak, I would punish him further. "You have always found me a dutiful wife, and in this hour of parting you shall have no other recollection of me. But there is one thing that you must promise me before you go away. Shall you go to the wars?"

"Of course. 'Tis for that I live."

"And for that you have suffered and entered into this wretched affair," I interrupted in my turn.

"Put it that way, if you will, madam. At any rate, as soon as war is declared and I can get aboard a ship, I shall be away. And may God help you then!"

"May He indeed," said I devoutly, praying quite a different prayer from that he fancied I meant. "But there is one thing that I must ask of you."

"And what is that?"

"That you will let me know your whereabouts, what ship you are on."

"I shall have to come back to this vicinity," he replied, "and I shall find means to communicate to you my intentions before my final departure."

"You give me your word on that?" I asked.

"I do."

"Your hand then."

I extended my own. He took it. Did his tremble in mine? I did not know; I could not tell. At any rate, he held it long and firmly. I sat beside him with bent head. I wondered what else he would do. I hoped. And judge of my disappointment when he released my hand and did nothing! How provoking the man was! Well, he lost his chance. I turned from him and for the rest of the day ignored him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

IN WHICH I AM MADE WELCOME IN THE NEW LAND

IT was a pleasant enough river, this gently flowing James, broad, tawny, with islands dotted here and there, and many noble wooded shores rising at intervals above lowlands, with great and spacious residences on either side, quite like the country houses of the best of our gentry in England.

It was nightfall before we made fast to a wharf at the foot of a high bluff.

"This is Eastcourt, madam," said my husband, making ready to scramble out of the vessel.

"I am glad we are arrived at last," said I.

"And I also. The sloop ties here for the night; the wind hath failed and the tide is at the ebb."

"And what of me and my welcome?" I asked anxiously.

It would be too hard to come through all these perils and this long journey to be ill received at last, I thought.

"If you will bide on deck a few moments, I will charge myself with the duty of acquainting your kinsman of your arrival and bring him here to assure you of that."

I confess that I looked forward to this meeting with some sinking of the heart. And yet why should I do so? For the men of my race were ever hospitable and kind, and I had heard my father say that this kinsman of his had been indebted to him for favors in times past, and I felt reasonably sure of a warm and kindly reception. Besides whether I were welcome or not, Brown would be there, and I had grown to feel that whatever might betide, he would see me safely through.

In perhaps half an hour, although the time seemed longer, I heard voices out of the darkness and footsteps coming down the long wharf. In a moment a bluff, soldierly looking man stepped down into the dimly lighted cockpit where I sat. I rose to greet him. He looked so much like my father that for a moment I could have fancied it was he.

"Madam!" he cried.

"Sir," I answered.

"Are you Caroline Martindale?"

I nodded.

And in the next moment I was picked up as if I had been a doll and then swung against the broad breast of my kinsman.

"'Fore God, child, you have a look of your father," he said heartily, thrusting me back for a better sight of my face. "I am glad that you came to me in your distress. Brown hath told me somewhat of your story and you shall tell the rest when you are safe in the Hall. Welcome, welcome to Eastcourt, to Virginia, to the

United States, girl! You have your father's eyes. I knew him and loved him when we were boys together, and now he's dead I am glad to have you and to play a father's part toward you."

I own I was overcome with the heartiness of this greeting. As soon as I could get breath, I asked a question.

"Where is Mr. Brown?"

"Miles away by this time!" laughed my kinsman. "He has the best horse in my stables and is galloping posthaste for Washington and the President with his precious dispatches."

"He's gone without seeing me!" I cried in great dismay.

"Matters of that kind," said Major Martindale, "wait for no woman. It was duty called him and of course he had no option. But come, we will go to the Hall and you shall tell me all about it."

Eastcourt Hall was a great place, more like the English country houses at which I had stayed than I had imagined any could be in this new land. It was crowded with servants, all black of course, and an air of hospitality and prodigality was visible everywhere. We sat down together at a table of old and rare mahogany, and the things it upbore in silver and china for our delectation were worthy of its age and dignity.

"Now, my girl," began my kinsman, as the servants withdrew and left us alone at the conclusion of the meal, "tell me all about it."

"How much do you know?" asked I.

He ran rapidly over the intelligence he had received from Brown, in which I perceived much had been made of my sufferings, my courage, and my adventures, and but little of the part my husband had played, not more at least than was absolutely necessary for a coherent story. It was my part then to tell his tale and well I did it.

"My dear girl," asked the major, after listening in silence to my glowing account, which betrayed more than I wanted perhaps, although it withheld the greater part of the truth, "what is this man to you?"

Should I continue the deception of the ship? I could not.

"Sir," said I deliberately, "I am his wife."

"God bless me!" exclaimed the major, staring in great surprise. "You don't mean it?"

"Yes, sir," said I, "his wife!"

"And you married him to save yourself?"

"At first that was the only reason."

"And now?"

I hesitated and could give no answer to this direct question, whereat my kinsman asked another even more personal and searching.

"Do you love him?"

"At any rate," I answered, evading the question, "I am married to him."

"But—" began the major.

"A moment!" I interrupted. "My husband has said that you knew him; that you knew his family."

"'Tis true."

"I want to know something about him," I asked, assuming the direct interrogation in my turn.

The major was visibly embarrassed.

"Why you see," he began, "his people once lived a few miles down the river here on a neighboring plantation. They are— He is alone in this world— Er—in short, you might call them farmers."

"They belong to the yeoman class?" I asked.

"Well, you might say so perhaps."

"Do you know anything discreditable of this young man?"

"God bless me, no. He's one of the finest—I mean he's entirely honest and respectable."

"Just so," I said, somewhat bitterly I admit.

For while honest and respectable are qualities one would fain have in a husband, I take it, some other description falls more sweetly upon a woman's ear, especially a woman such as I am. You say that about a man when you can say little else, I have learned.

"Is he very poor?" was my next question.

"Poor!" exclaimed the major, laughing. Then he checked himself, growing very red in the effort. "Why, he's not a pauper exactly. He has a little piece of land that will support him and a negro or two."

"Could he support a wife?"

"What do you mean, girl?"

"I mean just what I say. Could he support a wife?"

"Yes, I think so; that is, of course, if she were willing to put up with what he could offer her."

"And that is all you have to say, sir?"

"No, it is not all," returned my kinsman; "as your next of kin and in a certain sense as your self-appointed guardian, I should like to know what you mean to do in this anomalous position?"

"I don't know," I answered truthfully enough. "I am bound to this man."

"The marriage, as I understand it," said the major, "is no marriage."

"No," said I, blushing deeply, "not in the sense in which you mean it."

"Hum!" said the old man, tapping upon the table. "Would you wish a divorce?"

"I did not think of it."

"'Tis only procurable in this State by act of Legislature and for grave cause indeed."

"There is no cause," said I.

"But you can't go on this way, married to a man whom you— Do you love him?" he asked again.

"I—I don't know," I faltered. "I think I might have —cared—if he had been in my own station in life, and— sir," I cried, a sudden illumination flashing to my mind, "is he the illegitimate son of some——"

"Illegitimate!" thundered the major, striking the table a great blow, "the best— No, indeed, madam. He was born in honorable wedlock, as I happen to know, for I was one of the witnesses to his mother's marriage."

"Do you often perform such services for the lower classes in America?" I asked, with innocent arrogance.

"For the lower classes?—er—yes, of course. Cer-

tainly. You see things are different here. We're more democratic, and——"

"I see."

"And so you could have loved him if he had been a gentleman."

"He is a gentleman," I burst out. "No man could be more so. How dare you or anyone question it?"

"But you said—" exclaimed my dismayed cousin.

"I was talking of his degree, of his station in life, not of anything else."

"Well," said the major dubiously, "whatever that is, we can't alter it because you do or do not care for him, and there's no use of discussing it further."

"None," said I decisively.

"And there's another factor that enters into the situation," he continued. "Does he love you?"

"I don't know."

"Who does know?"

"I think he might," I continued, "if there had not been this barrier between us."

"But haven't you had any evidence?"

"He—he kissed my—foot that night in the cabin," said I, blushing furiously at the admission.

It seemed so absurd to talk about, quite different from the actual experience.

"Foot!" snorted the major contemptuously. "Well, why didn't he kiss you on the mouth like——"

"Sir," I interposed, "you forget the bargain, the bargain we had entered upon."

I would not confess to that scene in the cabin while

I was unconscious. There are some things I would not discuss even with so kind and good an old man as my cousin!

"Oh, of course, the bargain," said the major, rubbing his head. "Well, my dear, 'tis a matter in which I cannot give you any advice. You'll have to settle it yourself, I take it. Meanwhile you are as my daughter here at the Hall, and all that I have—I am an old bachelor, you know—is yours. There will be many a young gallant around here to pay his respects to you, if I say the word, if I let it be known that you are here, and——"

"Please don't," said I. "Add this to the warmth of your welcome and your other kindness that you say nothing about my presence. I am not free. I am a wife, you know, and it may be when they know that I am a—a—farmer's wife, they will not think me worthy their attention."

"There isn't a man on earth who wouldn't think you worthy of attention, my dear, whatever his condition or yours," said the old man admiringly.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

IN WHICH I TAKE MATTERS INTO MY OWN HANDS

AND so my life in Virginia began. A smart negro woman was attached to my person as my maid. My cousin put his purse at my disposal. We went by boat and carriage to Williamsburg, and even on to Richmond, where my wardrobe was replenished. There was nothing that my kinsman did not do for me. He swore a thousand times he was delighted to have me with him, and I was fain to believe it true.

But as for myself, I was in a fever of impatience. I had told the major that my husband had promised to return to the vicinity of Eastcourt before he went away for good, and the major had reckoned that it would be ten days at least before we could look for his arrival. I could scarcely bide the time. I had never longed for anything as I longed for a sight of this man. We had to come to some arrangement as to our future, and the suspense was fairly killing me. I chose to think that it was this suspense that gave me my deep anxiety, and nothing else. I was soon to be undeceived.

I forgot to state that on one of our rides—the major had the finest saddle horses in Virginia, I do believe—we passed by a little old brick, moss-covered, ivy-grown

cottage on the river edge of a great estate of several thousand acres, which adjoined the major's own. Back under the trees rose a stately, broad-porticoed, high-pillared mansion, whose quaint beauty would have charmed my eye if I had not been all attention to the modest cottage near the gate, which the major had pointed out to me as the property of my husband. I would fain have lingered about it, and have inspected it more closely, but my kinsman was not in a stopping mood that morning, and save for a hasty glimpse in passing, I saw but little of it. I looked at it as long as I could, wondering—but that was all.

Late in the afternoon of the eleventh day after my arrival, I sat alone on a rustic bench under the trees staring at the river, and longing for the return of my husband, when my kinsman came out on the porch and called to me. He was followed by a strange black man dressed for riding. In his hand the major held a paper.

"Caroline," he called, "the dispatches have been delivered to the President. War is certain. It may be declared at any moment."

His cheek was flushed, his eyes were sparkling with joy.

"But my—Mr. Brown, sir!" I cried.

The major lifted the paper.

"He writes me that he hath been ordered to join the *Constitution*, and——"

"He writes you, sir!" I cried, a strange sadness filling my breast. "He writes you and——"

"There is a letter here for you as well. It is ad-

dressed to Mistress Caroline Martindale. I take it, it is meant for you."

"Give it to me!" I cried, running toward him in my eagerness.

"The boy here, one of Brown's boys, just brought it," said my kinsman, coming to meet me, and smiling at my evident excitement.

Without a glance at the negro, who stood grinning and bowing by the major's side, I tore it open, and quickly read the following formal and disappointing epistle:

MADAME: The bearer of this letter, who is an old retainer of mine, will hand you something from me which I trust you will accept as from a shipmate and friend—not the less the latter, because, unfortunately for you, he happens also to sustain another relationship to you. War with England will have been declared when you are reading this. You may perhaps be interested to know that I have been appointed . . .

Appointed! Did they appoint common sailors to anything, I thought in a flash as I read this letter, my military training standing me in good stead as to that.

I have been appointed [the letter ran on] to the *Constitution*. That you may be happy in your life and may speedily find release from its present intolerable condition is the wish of one who for the first and last time presumes to subscribe himself as

Your husband,

WILLIAM BROWN.

"What have you brought me?" I asked, turning to the negro.

"Dis, ma'am," he answered, lifting up a heavy canvas bag, its mouth securely tied.

I sat down on the steps, untied the string, and poured from the bag a heap of gold pieces which rattled about the porch in all directions.

"Double eagles, I declare!" exclaimed the major, who had watched me with great interest.

He picked up one of them as he spoke. Then he sat down, gathered them together and began to count them.

"There are a hundred of them, Caroline," he said, arranging them in little piles, "and all fresh from the mint."

"How much is it?" I asked.

"Two thousand dollars—four hundred pounds, that is. 'Fore God, the man is generous," answered my cousin. "He bids me look after you," he continued, turning to his own letter, "and to say that suitable sums for your maintenance shall be sent to you quarterly from his bankers. This is for your trousseau."

"Bankers!" I exclaimed, in great surprise. "I thought you said he was a poor man!"

"Poor! Well, I did say so. I presume that he has—er—sold his patrimony, and thus managed to——"

"Where is your master?" I interrupted somewhat rudely, turning to the servant.

I was so excited I could not discuss irrelevant details, you see.

"He's home, miss."

"In the little house by the river?"

"No, ma'am, he——"

"Yes, of course," said my kinsman, turning viciously on the negro.

"Yessuh. Suttinly, suh, da's whah he's at, ma'am, an' he's mighty sad like too. I gwine tell him dat I done seed you an'——"

"You're going to tell him nothing," said I quickly. "Major Martindale, I want a horse."

"Would you ride?"

"Immediately."

"And where?"

"To the little house by the river."

"But——"

"Oh, don't stop me now! I must go to——"

"I bettah go tell him dat you a-comin', ma'am," said the negro.

"I want no message sent. Major, you will let me have a horse?"

"Certainly, certainly, my dear," said the major, beginning to realize the importance of the moment to me. "Do you wait here, and I will have one brought around immediately."

With that he turned away and went into the house. I wondered why he did not call some of the servants, but I had other things to interest me, and gave the matter little thought.

"What is your name?" I said, turning to the negro.

"Mah name's Cato, miss. I was one of ole Cun'l Sca'lett's boys."

"Colonel Scarlett?" said I. "I thought Major Martindale and Mr. Brown said you belonged to him?"

"Yes, ma'am, dat I does. I was done lef' to him."

"And how is he?"

"He's pow'ful sad, miss. He come from Washin'ton dis mawnin all tuckahed out, an' he's jes been settin' roun' an' thinkin' an' dreamin' an' lookin' lak he done lost his las' friend, an' we all don't know what's de mattah wid him. We's dat fond of him, ma'am, an' we can't tell what's griebin' of him. He des sit an' look obah at dis yere plantashun of Majuh Ma'tindale's. An' he rode obah to de edge ob de wood yondah wid me a while ago an' set on his hoss des a-lookin' an' a-lookin' till he seed you, an' den he tu'ned right roun' an' went back aftah giben me dis lettah an' dis money heah."

The major had worked quickly enough, it seemed, for my horse was now before the door.

"Why didn't I have Prince?" I asked, noting that the horse was a different one from that I usually rode, a slow-gaited palfrey, fit enough for ordinary ambling, but not for such wild dashes as my father's daughter delighted in.

"He's cast a shoe," said the major, "and so we had to give you this mare. She'll carry you safely enough."

"But not quickly enough," said I, flashing a look down at him as he mounted me to the saddle.

I waited not for habit, or anything. All I wanted was to be away.

"I'll send a groom with you," said the major.

"No, I want to go alone."

"But do you know the way?"

"I have but to follow the river road, and I shall be there."

"Wait," said the major. "I'll take a look at the saddle myself."

He took a long time fussing about the thing which was already perfect, as anybody could see. And finally, I must confess, I rather abruptly shook him off and put my horse to a canter.

"But your money?" called the major.

"Let it lie," I answered back, as I passed rapidly down under the trees to the river road.

I don't believe that the fat and somewhat sturdy mare that I rode had ever before been driven at such a pace as I put her through. I could not get to the little house too quickly. And yet when I did approach it, I reined in the animal till her pace fell to a walk. Slowly and more slowly we went, until just before I reached the door I stopped.

I think I was one burning blush from the foot that he had kissed to the roots of my hair. What was I about to do? What did the man think of me? What did I think of him? What would he think of me? If I sat there on the horse very long, I should be incapable of action. I drew my feet from the stirrups and slipped to the ground, and threw the bridle over the bough of a tree. I could scarcely stand, so nervous was I. Then I went slowly to the house. The door of it was open. He was there.

He was sitting in a chair before a table leaning his head on his hand and staring out of the window at the

yellow river slowly surging by. He did not see me in the doorway. I marked that he was thinner and paler now that he had been off the ship for a space, and that he seemed ineffably sad. He was dressed as I had most often seen him, like the sailor lad he was. I looked at him a long time. Then I nerved myself to further action. Trembling, shaking, my knees smiting together, my heart throbbing madly, my eyes swimming, I walked over to him and laid my hand upon his shoulder. I had made no sound. He had not been aware of my presence until my palm touched him. Then he sprang to his feet. It was my turn to grow pale, and his to grow red.

"Madam!" he cried, and in spite of his attempt at formality his voice rang and quivered. I felt it in my very soul. "You have come here?"

I nodded. I could say no word at first.

"For what purpose? To what end?"

"To thank you for it all, and—and——"

"To say good-by?" he interposed. "You might have spared me that."

"I could not let you go away forever," said I softly, "without—without——"

The man would not help me.

"I have been so lonely the past ten days," I faltered. "You were away, and——"

"But you got along very well without me for three weeks on the ship!"

"Yes, but I saw you every day, and I knew that in the end I should——"

"Doesn't the major treat you well?"

"None could be more kind," I continued. "He is hospitality and generosity itself, but I am so unhappy. And you don't seem glad to see me. You let me stand here like an intruder, and——"

He awoke to action at once. He brought a chair. He sat me down in it. He hovered about me in anxiety.

"I am a poor man," he said, "but I can offer you some hospitality."

He turned to a cupboard and brought therefrom a bottle of wine, but I pushed it aside.

"I want nothing," said I, which was not true, for I wanted something very much, but 'twas not wine.

"My man, did he give you my letter?"

"Yes."

"And the money?"

"That, too, but I cannot take it."

"Why not?" he asked. "Surely a husband may provide for his wife."

"It is not that," I said, "but you have robbed yourself. You are a poor man. This is your all."

"No, madam," said he, looking at me pointedly, "not my all."

"Have you more?"

"Nay, nothing more," he smiled sarcastically. "I had a wild thought for a moment."

"What was the thought?"

"'Tis nothing," he answered stupidly, but I knew that his thought had been of me, and that he should tell me of it before I left that room, and I was very glad.

"You will take the money, won't you?" he pleaded.

"On one condition," said I.

"And what is that?" he asked. "If 'tis a possible one, it is granted, and if impossible, it shall be brought about."

It was like him to speak that way, who had accomplished the impossible in my behalf, to whom I was indebted for that which a woman prizes above life, my honor. And how handsome he was! There was just a faint indication of that red scar across his cheek which he got in my cause, and which I loved.

As for me—why withhold the confession longer?—I could have fallen at his feet and worshiped him! I did not care who he was or what he was, or where he came from, what his station. He was my husband, and I loved him, and I knew as I looked at him that he loved me. Why should I hesitate longer? I was ever a bold and fearless woman. I tore to shreds the conventions that held us apart.

"That condition," I said.

"What is it?"

"I will share your fortune," said I, rising and speaking slowly and very low, but not too low for him to hear me, you may be sure, "if I may share your poverty as well."

The man went whiter then. He fairly shrank from me. He leaned his arm against the table to keep himself from falling; his other hand went to his heart. Not a movement he made escaped me. Every rise and fall of his breast in its labored breathing was known to me,

and I would not have lost an evidence of his glorious passion for me for the world.

"I mean that I—it's so hard," I said, "and you won't help me."

"Help you, madam! I would help you with my life itself."

"You kissed my foot," I said, thrusting it forth where he could see it, and indeed 'tis a pretty one, and well shod, "once you said——"

"I was mad when I said those words," he cried, "and I am madder now. Why have you come here? I could have gone away and left you without a sight, without a word. I could have died for you. I would have done it gladly, rejoicing in the thought that my death had made you free, but now—now—I cannot."

"Now," said I, "you shall not. Oh, don't you see, don't you understand?"

"I see, I understand nothing!" he murmured.

I went closer to him.

"I am your wife, your true, devoted, faithful wife till death us do part. Where you go, I must go. Where you——"

"Do you say this because we are bound together, and 'tis inevitable, because you would fain make the best of a frightful bargain?"

"Because—look at me!" I said, forcing myself to raise my face to his own. "Look into my eyes, lay your hand upon my heart! What do they tell you? I do it, I say it—because—don't you know?"

"Great God!" he cried exultantly, and yet still dis-

trustful, "this is too much happiness to be borne. Do you care?"

"Care!" said I, and I laughed in pure gladness of heart, "I care so much that I can't live without you. See—I have done all the love making. Have you no word?"

He was nearer to me now. I laid my hand upon his arm, and felt it tremble beneath my touch.

"Have you thought what it is you do?" he said very low and clear.

"I have thought of nothing," said I, "but that I am your wife, and that I love you."

"I am a plain man, a poor man, a common man. Can you live in this cottage?"

"With you anywhere," said I, "and I care not whether you be plain or humble, or what you are. I know that you are the truest and noblest, the best of men, and that, whatever your station, you are my hero and my king. I love you, I love you, that is enough!"

"Caroline! Caroline!" he cried, joy flooding his face as sunshine succeeds the dawn.

And then he caught me in his arms and pressed me to his heart; his lips sought mine. What can I say of the happiness that filled my soul at that moment?

"You have not," said I when I could find room for speech and desire for it, for there are moments of silence in which heart speaks to heart more eloquently than tongue to tongue, in which there is more speech in the pressure of lip to lip, of cheek to cheek, of breast to breast, than in all the vocabularies that were ever

written, "you have not yet said that you loved me. Indeed, I have wooed you and won you. It was most unmaidenly."

"My darling!" he cried, "what need of words? Did you not know that from the first moment you fell against my shoulder in the coach I loved you?"

"You took a strange way to show your affection, sir, by threatening me with instant death," I laughed.

"Well, from the moment in which I saw you by the light of day, I loved you. Nay, do not rob me of the feeling that at the first touch my heart was born," he said, taking me again into his arms. "But indeed I do you cruel wrong. Are you content to live here in this little cottage with me when I am at home, waiting for me here when I am away at the wars on the sea?"

"With you here, waiting for you here whenever you leave me," said I. "Working with you and for you and serving you, and being content to be only your wife until death us do part, and may God in His mercy long defer that day!"

"There is no bullet cast that can harm me now," said he, taking me again to his heart.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

WHEREIN I FIND THAT ONLY ONE THING MATTERS AFTER ALL

IT had been very late in the day when I had ridden over, and now it was growing dusk. The interview in the little house by the river had taken longer than I have taken to tell it, because there were so many interruptions, which took time, I suppose, and to which I have only alluded. My husband, after a while, proposed that we should go up to the great house to see what we could get for supper to bring back with us to the little cottage for our evening meal.

"But is there not some one there?" I asked.

"Colonel Scarlett, who owned the place, is dead these many years, and I am a sort of keeper of it when I am at home," he answered.

He stepped to an inner door, called a negro and gave him some directions, and then he came back to me. It was perhaps half a mile to the house, and as we stepped out under the trees, I saw the negro riding rapidly up the road.

We went along very slowly, hand in hand, talking such things as lovers do, and stopping in shady nooks to hold each other close and to whisper words so tender

that they could not be uttered aloud even on the still air, but must reach the beloved by being told close in the ear, or communicated from lip to lip, in kisses that were so sweet that I cannot write of them in this story. But every woman who has loved and been loved will know what I mean, and what those kisses meant—and some men may know, too.

It was quite dark before we turned from the noble avenue of trees to the open lawn in front of the house. There were a crowd of people there, slaves in livery, many of them bearing torches and lights. They were shouting and laughing and cheering. They made a way for us, and hand in hand solemnly and gravely we ascended the steps and passed through the door into a noble hall, greater even than the one at Eastcourt, almost greater than any that I had known.

"What does this mean?" I asked, greatly wondering.

"It means," said my husband, turning to me, "that you are at home."

"At home!" I cried. "Is this yours?"

"No," said he.

"Whose, then?"

"It is yours," he replied.

"But I thought that Colonel Scarlett——"

"He was my father."

"And your name is?"

"William Scarlett."

"And mine?"

"Caroline Scarlett."

"Brown or Scarlett," said I at last, "'tis a matter of little moment since I have you."

"And I you," he agreed. "'Tis the one untruth I told you."

"I remember," said I, "that you said you had told me one, and I am glad to have the facts as to that. Have you told me the truth in everything else?"

"Only half the truth in one other thing."

"And that is?"

"There aren't words enough to tell you all my love, dearest, and with half you will have to be content!"

"But you are not a poor man, then? That was another untruth."

"Oh, no," was the answer. "I was poor until you dowered me with such riches as no mortal man ever enjoyed before."

"With such riches!" said I stupidly.

"With yourself, Caroline."

Now, I had ever put a fair enough value upon myself, but there was extravagance in this that— Well, I loved it as I loved everything he said or did, or ever had said or done.

"I am to be a poor woman most of the time," I said, meeting his spirit with my own, "a poor woman after all."

"How is that, Caroline?"

"I shall only be rich in your presence, when you are here, and you are a sailor and are going away."

He shook his head at that.

"But I shall come back, I shall come back to you. There shall not be a moment even in which I do not think of my wife waiting for me here in the old hall, in which I do not see myself standing by her side as I stand now, in which I do not think of myself as I know myself at this moment."

I was glad of course that he was rich and well born and all that, but at heart I really cared nothing about it. I loved him and he loved me, and nothing else in the world mattered or ever could matter. In that happiness I cared nothing for the deception that had been practiced upon me. Still I was curious, being a woman, and so I asked some questions.

"And how many people knew who and what you were?" I asked.

"Dr. Tooker knew, Captain Harks had some idea, Captain Hull knew, Mr. Morris, and one or two of the others. I am a lieutenant in the United States Navy and with some of these officers I had sailed. And your kinsman knew, of course."

"But did Dr. Tooker marry you as William Brown?"

"The certificate was made out as William Scarlett, but you did not seem to have had a chance to look at it before it was torn up."

"True," said I. "It did not mean so much to me then as it does now."

"It meant much to me, or I hoped that it might. I never knew how much till this hour."

"And why did these men keep your secret?"

"Because I asked them to. I had a foolish hope that I might win you as a common sailor and not as the Scarlett of this county."

"A hope!" said I. "I believe I should have loved you if you had been a Blackamoor."

"Hardly that," he laughed.

"Well, anyway, I began to love you from the moment I saw you, but I fought against it. I shall fight no longer. And how did you know that I was coming here to-day? Have you been playing with me all through our acquaintance?"

"No," he replied, "your kinsman was good enough to send a servant over here on Prince to say that you were coming to the house on the river road."

"So that's why he would not allow me to ride him and sent me on a slow horse, to give you time?"

"Yes, to give me time."

"And did you know I was there?"

"Know you were there? My heart told me the moment you stepped in the doorway."

"Why didn't you turn around then?"

"I was determined," laughed my husband.

And then he stopped.

"You were determined that all the lovemaking should come from me?"

"Yes," he replied.

"I should be angry with you, I suppose, but——"

"But you're not!" he cried and caught me in his arms again and then I was simply powerless. "Besides

what mattered it who made the love since the results were what both hearts craved?"

"And by the way," he continued, "I believe that you owe me something."

"I owe you everything," said I, "but what do you refer to now?"

He reached his hand to his neck and pulled thence, depending from a ribbon, the ring I had given him on shipboard.

"You were to redeem this for your passage," he laughed.

"I fear the pledge is beyond me now unless—having all of me in your possession—that will content you."

Whereupon he took me in his arms again, at which I was not sorry. I could never have enough of his affection. It seemed to me that he only wanted an excuse to do so, and I was scarcely released before I was caught again.

"I shall have the ring made larger to fit your finger," I said, when I could get breath, "and I am therefore in pawn to you for life."

"I shall see that none redeems you out of my hand," he answered tenderly.

Then he closed the hall door. He led me to a great chair and sat me down, gently and reverently. He knelt down at my feet as he had done the first moment that I knew him in the carriage, as he had done in that tragic hour in the cabin of the ship. I should remember forever those two moments, and not less this moment

when he enthroned me in my own house. He drew off my slipper, bent his head, and pressed his lips once more to my foot as he had done before.

And I was the happiest, proudest woman on earth as I laid my hand lovingly upon his bended head.

THE END

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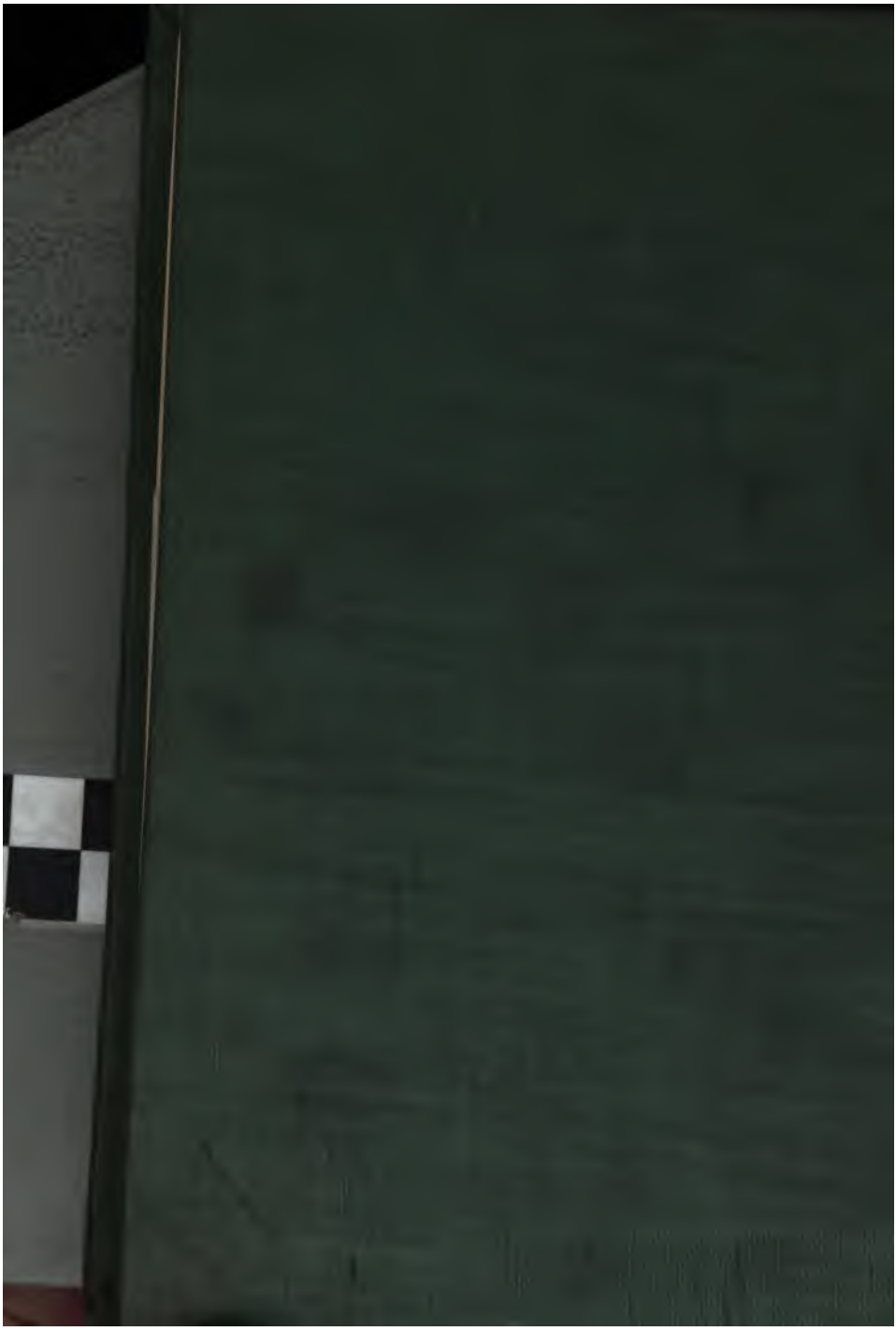
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